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THEOLOGY

EXPLAINED AND DEFENDED,

IN

A SERIES OF SERMONS,

BY

TIMOTHY DWIGHT, S.T.D. LL.D.

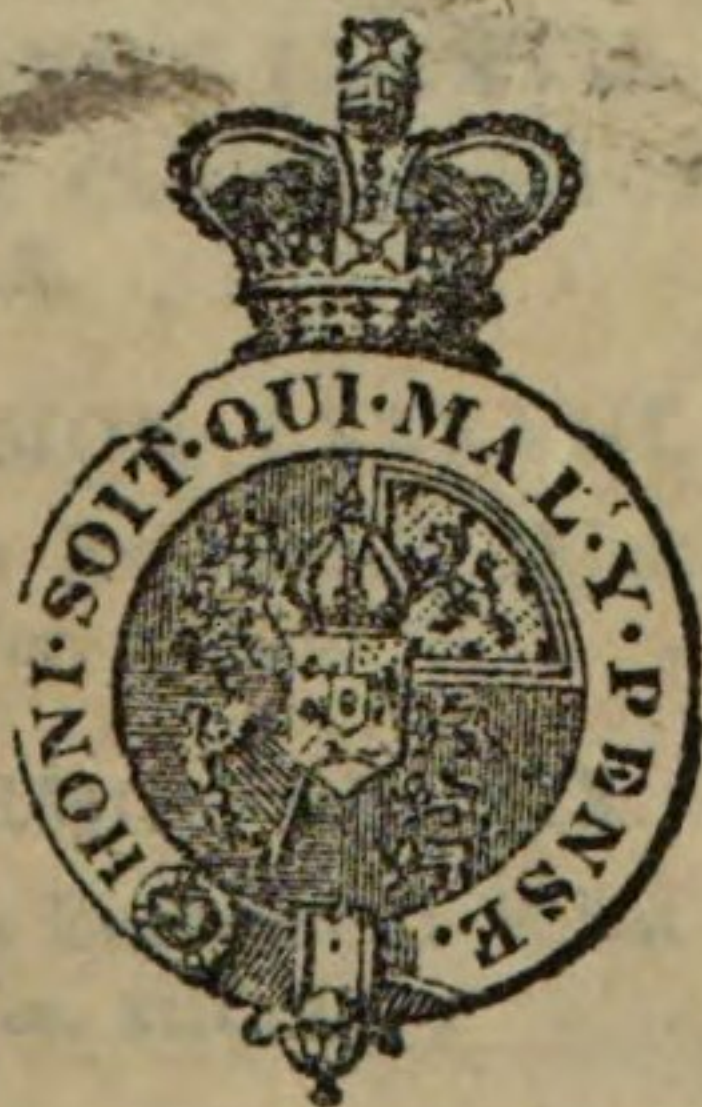
Late President of Yale College, Connecticut.

WITH

A MEMOIR OF THE LIFE OF THE AUTHOR,
AND A PORTRAIT.

IN SIX VOLUMES.

VOL. IV.



LONDON :

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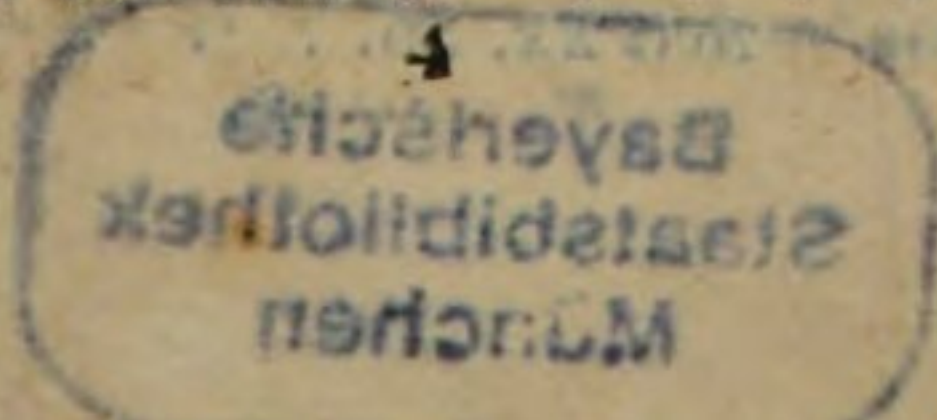
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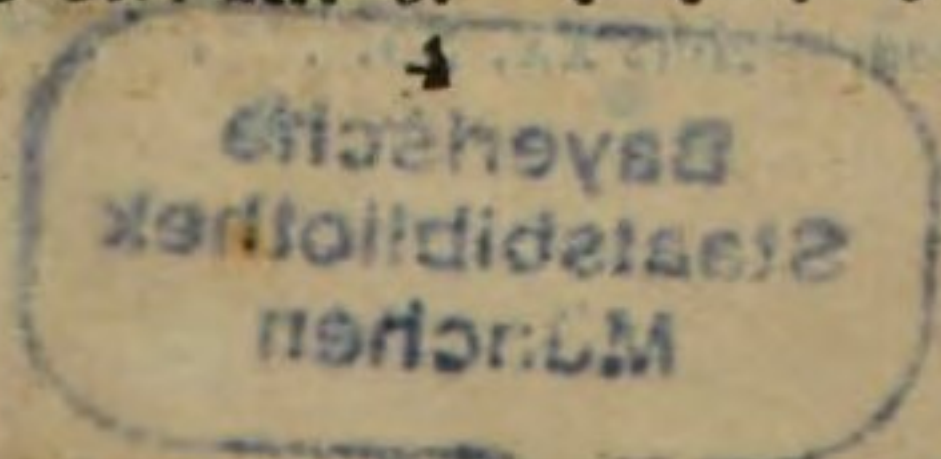
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SERMON LXXXIV.

REGENERATION.

ITS CONSEQUENCES. PEACE OF CONSCIENCE.

Peace I leave with you : my peace I give unto you : not as the world giveth, give I unto you.—JOHN xiv. 27.

HAVING examined the nature of adoption and sanctification, I shall now proceed to consider another consequence of this change in man, *viz. evangelical peace.*

These words are a part of Christ's first discourse to his apostles after the institution of the Lord's Supper. He was now about to leave the world. His death he had often predicted to them in the plainest language ; yet so strong were their expectations of a reigning, conquering Messiah, that they seem never to have believed these predictions. So far as they were able, they appear to have interpreted them in any manner rather than the true one ; and, when they could not misinterpret them, to have concluded, that they involved some mystery which it was beyond their power to unriddle.

However, as the time drew near, and the events which led to this great one began to thicken, they became apprehensive and alarmed. What evils were before them they seem not to have realized ; but they appear to have been fully sensible that something terrible was at hand, and to have become deeply discouraged by loose and undefined forebodings.

Christ understood perfectly the state of their minds ; and, with his own peculiar tenderness, commenced the benevolent work of furnishing them the necessary relief. This he accomplished in three Discourses ; the first included in this, the second is

the two following, and the third in the seventeenth, chapters. Never were consolations so well devised, or so well administered. The discourses are beautiful beyond all parallel; supremely instructive, exquisitely tender, and replete with considerations of the most supporting nature. The last of them is a prayer, more interesting, more sublime, more wonderful, than ever was or ever will be uttered in the present world; and may fairly be regarded as a specimen of that intercession which the divine Advocate makes for his followers 'before the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.'

Among the considerations which endear these discourses of Christ to his children, the most affecting one is, they are his *dying words*; his last addresses before he ascended the cross. They succeeded the institution of the sacramental supper; they preceded the crucifixion. Never was there an occasion so interesting, so solemn, so divine; nor was any mind, beside that of Christ, ever so perfectly fitted to understand and feel the nature of this occasion, or so able to employ it to the best of all purposes. He seems here to have poured out his soul with supreme love and infinite endearment. The whole Saviour is brought out to view; the God becomes visible in his most lovely and glorious character.

The apostles were now to be left by him, to go unbefriended and unprotected into a world of enemies, and to meet all the evils which could be inflicted on them by bigotry, malice, and persecution. To support them in this state of suffering, he promises them a rich variety of blessings, particularly the presence and everlasting love of his Father and himself; reminds them of his own sufferings, and of the fortitude with which he had endured them, and assures to them the consolation of the Spirit of truth, as a most desirable and delightful support under all external distresses.

Of all the blessings contained in these promises, none seems to be better suited to their situation and

their wants than that which is anounced in the text. When contentions multiply and enemies invade from without; when friends withdraw, and comforts diminish; when enjoyments lessen, and hope retires; nothing can be more timely, more desirable, more welcome, than peace within; peace, quieting all the tumults of the mind, soothing the wounds of a troubled conscience, and allaying, on the one hand, fear, on the other, suffering.

That we may understand the value of this legacy left by the Redeemer, not to the apostles only, but to all his followers, it will be useful to consider,

I. *The nature of the peace which he gave.*

II. *The manner in which he gave it.*

I. *I will endeavour to explain the nature of the peace which Christ gave his disciples.*

Peace is always opposed to war; and, when begun in any instance, involves the cessation of the preceding conflict. With a direct reference to such a conflict, Christ was pleased to bestow the blessing mentioned in the text; and called it by a name fitted to shew both the nature of the evils to be remedied, and the nature of the remedy.

Such a conflict actually exists between man and himself, his fellow-men, and his Maker. Against God this hostility manifests itself in ten thousand acts of resistance to his pleasure. While he claims the supreme love and implicit obedience of every intelligent creature, man denies both his claims, and the rights on which they are founded; and boldly sets up, in opposition to them, claims and rights of his own, which he determines to support to the utmost of his power. For this end he commences a progress of revolt and contention, which occupies most of his time and most of his thoughts; and at death leaves, not unfrequently, the controversy undecided.

With his fellow-men his contention arises from two sources, his own selfishness, and theirs. The mind in which selfishness reigns, always wishes, intends, and labours to make every other interest subservient to its own; or, at the least, to prevent it from dis-

turbing, precluding, or diminishing its own. From this source have sprung all the private and all the public contentions which have destroyed the peace of neighbourhoods, and ravaged the world; the sufferings and the sighs, the tears and the groans, which have spread from one end of heaven to the other.

Nor is man less busily employed in conflicting with *himself*. The passions and appetites of the human heart have ever opposed the dictates of conscience. The conscience was intended by God to regulate the moral conduct of the man; and strenuously and firmly asserts its right to this important and most necessary control. Still more strenuously the passions rebel against it, force the man to submit to their own dictates, and hurry him into a course of disobedience. In this progress of guilt, conscience holds out her dreadful mirror to his terrified eye, exhibits him to himself, odious, deformed, and fearfully exposed to the anger of God.

To this distracted, miserable being, peace is announced in the text, by him who knew all the wants, sufferings, and dangers of our race. Upon a strict examination, the legacy will be found to be exactly suited to the state of those for whom it was intended.

1. *It is a happy state of the mind, or intellect.*

Every person, who has at all entertained serious and solemn thoughts concerning religious subjects, must have often perceived a multitude of doubts springing up in his mind at different times, concerning the Word of God; the evidence, by which its divine origin is evinced, and the nature of the doctrines and precepts which it contains. These doubts may at times grow out of ignorance; usually they spring from the heart, from its disrelish to the truth itself, and its opposition to its Author. Every doubt on this subject is attended with some degree of distress. The soul is unwilling that there should be any such truths, and that God should have such a character, as to be capable of being the Author of

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them. Especially is this observation applicable to those doctrines which exhibit ourselves as guilty, condemned, and ruined; and God as pure, holy, and sovereign. Against these doctrines mankind have contended in all ages; have doubted their truth, have denied their import, and have exploded the evidence by which they were sustained. In the place of these doctrines the mind substitutes others which are more palatable to itself. For their obvious and real meaning, which it is determined not to admit, it substitutes others; kindred perhaps, and plausible, but oblique, and incapable of being supported. In this manner it struggles to get loose from the truth of God, sometimes by believing that he has made no revelation of his will to mankind; sometimes by determining that he has made no such revelation as is commonly received; and generally by adopting a creed essentially different from that which is contained in the Scriptures. Every part of this creed it makes more pleasing to itself, less terrifying, less humiliating, and yet, as it hopes, equally safe.

Still Revelation, in spite of all these labours and struggles, continues to be supported by no small evidence. The *obvious* meaning of the doctrines which it contains will, at times, appear but too probably the *true* meaning. In spite of the mind itself, its arguments, and persuasions, God may, and it frequently fears will, be found to be just such a Being, as he seems to be exhibited in the Scriptures. Its own character, also, it almost daily suspects (and conscience perpetually enhances the suspicion) is just such as the Scriptures have declared; and its danger neither less real, nor less terrible. Thus the soul becomes 'a troubled sea, which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.'

Nor is either this opposition, or the distress which springs from it, less excited by the tenour of the scriptural *precepts*, than by that of the *doctrines*. In the view of such a mind, the precepts appear to be unnecessarily numerous, nice, and rigid; enjoining

many things which it thinks might better have been omitted, and prohibiting many things which it conceives would have been much better allowed. The life which they require, it pronounces to be unnecessarily strict, difficult, and discouraging, and regards as being of a gloomy and melancholy nature. Hence it supposes, and at times believes, that God cannot have intended that his precepts should be understood in their obvious meaning; and that some other meaning, attended with many softenings, and involving many limitations, is to be attributed to them; or that, at the worst, a partial, imperfect obedience to them will ultimately be accepted.

Under the influence of these wishes, and the views to which they give birth, accompanied by fears that the things thus opposed may all be the real pleasure of God, the views erroneous, and the wishes sinful, such a mind wearies itself to find out a more palatable moral system, is harassed by suspense, and distressed by painful apprehensions.

But when the hostility of the heart towards its Maker, and towards his truth, is dissolved by the mild influence of the Spirit of grace, and the soul is endued with love to its Maker, the character of God, and the doctrines and precepts of his word are seen with new optics, and appear therefore in a new light. It is the nature of evangelical love to delight alike in the truth and its Author. Both are thenceforth seen with the eyes of good-will. Of course, God appears to the mind invested with his proper character and supreme glory; as the sum of all excellence; as infinitely great, and wise, and good. It is seen to be impossible for him to deceive, or to be deceived. Whatever he declares is therefore admitted without reserve. The divine origin of the Scriptures is readily believed, because the evidence which supports it is such as to satisfy any candid mind, and because the mind in question has now become possessed of real candour. The true and obvious meaning of the doctrines and precepts, wherever it is seen, is readily received, because it is relished,

and because God is believed to have made his precepts 'plain to him that understandeth,' or, in other words, is possessed of piety. The things to be believed, the mind now loves to believe. The things required, it now chooses to do. The nature of the doctrines, and the reasons on which the precepts are founded, it will indeed, at times, be unable to unravel. But here its faith and obedience will be implicit; because it knows that God does not prescribe without the best reasons, and that his instructions, however mysterious, must be always true, and always desirable. What it understands it welcomes. What it does not understand it receives with a humble submission to him who has said, 'The secret things belong to God; but the things that are revealed belong to men.'

From such a mind, it is easy to see, suspense and perplexity must vanish of course, together with all the agitation, fear, and pain, with which they were attended. The weapons of its warfare have been laid down; its toils are ended, its alarms are over, its struggles are relinquished; and a delightful repose has succeeded to its multiplied, long-continued, and painful efforts; a repose doubly delightful; in its own nature, and as a charming contrast to the various troubles by which it has been so often and so deeply distressed.

2. *It is a happy state of the affections.*

It has been already sufficiently indicated that the affections are originally alienated from God, and opposed to his government and pleasure. The spirit of apostasy is, primarily, a spirit of pride and self-dependance, which always exalts itself against its Maker. The angels who fell, fell by refusing to 'keep their first estate;' (την ἑαυτῶν ἀρχὴν) *their own office, or principality*: and by 'deserting (ἀπολιποντας) their habitation' (οἰκητηριον, *their station*), they refused to continue even in that exalted rank of existence, and to execute the duties of that high station, assigned to them by the goodness of God. The same spirit predominates in fallen men. *They too are dissa-*

tified with their own station, and their own duties. All apostate beings say to God in their hearts, 'We will not have thee to reign over us.'

Equally hostile to the divine government is 'the lust of the flesh (sensuality), and the lust of the eyes' (avarice). Concerning these three great controlling affections of the human mind it is alike true, that 'they are not of the Father, but of the world;' and that, wherever they reign, 'the love of the Father' cannot exist.

From the indulgence of this spirit continually spring up in the soul haughty claims upon its Maker for an increase of its enjoyments, and an exemption from its duties: claims which God never satisfies, unless in the way of judgment and indignation. The soul therefore is discontented with its allotments; questions his wisdom, goodness, and truth; murmurs against his providence; refuses to perform its own duty; and thus carries on a continual, ardent, painful, conflict with its Maker.

A controversy with such a being as God, cannot fail of being attended with perpetual anxiety and alarm. He who is the subject of it dreads the presence of God, is terrified by all the threatenings of his word, trembles at the approach of death; shrinks from the judgment, and looks towards a future retribution with horror.

Of these evils there is but one possible termination, and that is submission to God. Whenever this is accomplished in earnest, they dissolve like an enchantment in Arabian tales. The Creator, before dreaded and hated, is changed at once, to the view of the soul, into an affectionate parent, revered, loved, and delightfully obeyed. This awful enemy becomes instantaneously an everlasting and almighty friend; this hard master, a divine and boundless benefactor. His character is then contemplated with awe indeed, but with delight also. His 'commandments,' no longer 'grievous,' are preferred to 'thousands of gold and of silver.' His presence, no longer terrible, is continually coveted; and commu-

nion with him in prayer and praise is daily song and delightfully found.

In this manner the affections become serene, cheerful, and pleasant. The storm subsides into a calm ; and the darkness of the soul is illumined with a perpetual sunshine.

3. *It is a happy state of the conscience.*

When the affections have thus bowed to their Creator ; when the soul has sincerely said, ‘ Thy will be done ; ’ conscience, unopposed and undisturbed, dictates whatever is to be done, and smiles its approbation whenever it is performed. In the various retrospects which the Christian takes of his progress at the end of a day, a week, a month, or a year, he is enabled to look on and approve ; and to feel a supporting hope that he is approved in some good measure by his God. His thoughts, affections, and designs, cease to be objects of dread ; and self-examination to be a duty which he cannot perform. To himself he is no longer a stranger. Prayer he no longer dreads. From his moral character he no longer shrinks. At his future destiny he ceases to shudder. A daily, welcome, cheerful, visitor at the internal fireside, he finds there nothing but peace, harmony, and pleasure.

4. *It is a happy state of the life.*

In a world like this, it will not be imagined that external peace can be perfect. Although the man in question is possessed of a peaceful spirit only, yet in those around him he will not always find the same disposition. In *him* there is no cause of hostility ; but in *them* it will not of course be extinguished. While he is surrounded by beings of this description, therefore, he cannot expect undisturbed peace. Yet amid the discord and violence of this world, his moderation, his kindness will either allay, or quietly and firmly endure the storm. Men of candid dispositions beholding his conduct will approve and commend, and men of prejudice and passion will often be overcome, and desist from their persecution.

Yet even here he will find many persons of a character kindred to his own. Of the approbation, the love, and the kind offices of these men, he is assured. The esteem of wisdom and worth is invaluable, is accompanied by sincere love, is followed by a perpetual train of kind offices, and is therefore an ample compensation for the contempt, hatred, and obloquy of all the unreasonable and unworthy. Should he meet then with many troubles from men of this character, he will still find a rich enjoyment from the approbation and good-will of the wise and virtuous; 'a table' of rich viands, 'spread' before him 'in the presence of his enemies, a cup running over' with blessings.

At the same time he is still more refreshed and comforted by a sense of the approbation of God. A humble hope of forgiveness is accompanied of course by a hope of the divine complacency. The 'favour' of God even in this world 'is life, and his loving-kindness better than life.' A disposition to obey this great and glorious Being is always delightful; and his 'law sweeter' to an evangelical taste 'than honey, and the honeycomb.' Although men therefore, although all men, should rise up in hostility against him, he would say with David, 'The Lord is on my side, I will not fear. What can man do unto me? I have set the Lord always before me. because he is at my right hand I shall not be moved. The Lord God is his shield; he cannot fail therefore of being safe. The Lord God is his sun; his life will therefore be cheered with the light of heaven.

II. *The manner, in which this legacy is given, is taught in those remarkable words of our Saviour, 'Not as the world giveth, give I unto you.'*

The world gives with an intention to gain at least as much as it gave; and thus gives for its own benefit, not for ours. The world gives by halves; and often resumes what it has given. The world gives grudgingly; with a meanness which imbitters the boon to those who receive it. The world gives in

pretence, and not in reality ; its gifts being at best, of little value, and of momentary duration. Finally, the world reproaches us, as being deeply indebted for its largesses, and imperiously demands servile acknowledgments and base compliances, as a proper return for the obligations which it has conferred.

Christ, on the contrary, gives with perfect liberality and unlimited bounty ;—cheerfully, never resuming what he has given ;—for our benefit only ;—really, and not in pretence ;—with absolute sincerity, and supreme nobleness of disposition. His gifts, also, while they are of high value in themselves, endure for ever. At the same time he never reproaches us on account of his blessings ; and demands of us no unworthy sacrifices.

REMARKS.

From these observations we learn,

I. *How to estimate this legacy of Christ.*

To a being in the situation of man, as described in the former part of this discourse, such a gift is plainly and pre-eminently necessary. Condemned, loathed, and afflicted by his Maker, he has no friend to whom he may betake himself for consolation, and no refuge to which he may fly for safety. Whatever he does God is present to see and to retribute. An enemy here, he is an enemy every where ; an enemy from whom there is no concealment, defence, nor escape. Still the circumstances of the unhappy man would be less dreadful, if he could find peace and support within. But there conscience arms herself against him ; while his rebellious passions bring their pain in hand, and are frequently followed by remorse and despair. When he looks abroad, he sees his fellow-creatures at war with him also, and from them seeks in vain for an alleviation of his sufferings.

In this situation Christ proclaims to him peace with God, with mankind, and with himself ; ‘ peace passing all understanding ;’ peace, which ‘ the world’ can neither give, nor take away.’ Henceforth nothing is desirable in his sight, but that which God

chooses ; nothing lovely, but that which God loves. To know the divine will is in his view to know all that is necessary ; and to obey it, all that is useful. He is assured of the divine protection, and is therefore safe : for he knows that no enemy can endanger his welfare, or disturb his repose.

In the mean time, 'his soul has *returned to its rest*,' and is quiet. The storm is past, and is succeeded by serenity and sunshine. If he finds enemies abroad, he disarms half their rage by his own meekness ; the rest he sustains, pities, and forgives.

In times of danger, when God comes out against mankind, to 'judge the world in righteousness,' he enjoys the unspeakable consolation of believing that this awful Being is a friend to him. When, therefore, the tempest rages, the famine desolates, or the pestilence hurries its victims to the grave ; 'when a thousand fall at his side, and ten thousand at his right hand, it shall not come near HIM.'

Afflictions will, however, reach even him. It is necessary, that he should be chastened : and chastening in its very nature is grievous. But for this grief, the peace of the gospel provides a sure and delightful alleviation. The pain, he knows, is inflicted by the 'Father of his spirit, that he may become a partaker of his holiness and live.' He receives it, therefore, with patience and resignation ; and thus strips disease of its languor, robs pain of its sting, and lights up a cheering lamp in the dark chambers of sorrow.

In death, that melancholy and distressing day to the wicked, his eye penetrates the gloom, and describes the glorious morning which dawns beyond it. On the other side of this narrow, gloomy valley, spreads a world of peace ; where no storm ever blows, no enemy ever invades, and no danger ever threatens.

There all are friends. God is his friend ; Christ is his friend ; and none but his friends are found among 'the innumerable company of angels, or the general assembly of the first-born.'

2. *How greatly is this blessing enhanced by the consideration, that Christ has given us HIS OWN PEACE.*

‘Peace I leave with you; MY PEACE I give unto you.’ In this declaration we are reminded of the glorious character of *him*, who bestows the legacy, and of the wonderful things which he has done to procure it for *us*. Christ is divinely great and excellent, and the gift is suited to his character—is excellent, noble, and divine. It is the rich fruit, the genuine evidence, of virtue; a seal impressed by the Saviour on the soul, as unquestionable proof that it has become his; a living witness, that he has there taken up his residence, as in a temple in which he is pleased to dwell. It is his ‘still, small voice,’ whispering in delightful accents, that he is there; and that he is there on his own most benevolent purpose of purifying it for heaven, and quickening it with immortal life. The giver is divine, the gift is divine; the end for which it is given is also divine.

The things which he has done and suffered to procure this gift for man, are infinitely great and endearing. For this end, when he was ‘in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God; he made himself of no reputation, was made in the likeness of men, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.’ In the peace which Christians enjoy, they are presented with a perpetual memorial of these wonderful efforts of him, ‘*who thus in his flesh abolished the enmity;*’ and made, preached, and became, ‘peace to them who were afar off, and to them who were nigh.’ Whenever this delightful serenity of soul is enjoyed by us, we cannot easily avoid recollecting that with boundless benignity the Son of God became man; lived a life of unceasing humiliation and suffering, died on the cross, rose from the dead, ascended to heaven, and there intercedes for ever, that this blessing may be ours. What love can be compared to this? What character was ever so lovely, so endearing, so peculiarly divine?

As the peace of Christ also, this glorious posses-

sion assumes a new character of excellence and worth. In him this peace was the result of consummate wisdom and supreme rectitude; a divine harmony of perfect intelligence and immeasurable love. It was a possession completely independent. None could give it; none could take it away. In the pure, serene, eternal mind of the Saviour it dwelt of course, inseparable and for ever. It was the necessary and immortal offspring of immortal excellence: the co-eternal splendour of light eternal. 'Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever he had formed the earth and the world; then was it by him, as one brought up with him; and was daily his delight, rejoicing alway before him: rejoicing (with a divine prescience) in the future habitable parts of the earth, and placing its delights in the sons of men.'

In his mediatorial residence among the children of apostate Adam, amid all his sorrows and labours, amid all the opposition, rejection, and persecution which he experienced, amid all the living anguish and dying agonies which he suffered, this celestial companion, this divine inmate of his bosom, perpetually sustained him; and diffused fortitude and serenity around his soul. Thus sustained, thus tranquillized, he smiled in agony and triumphed in death.

To us, as to him, it is peace 'passing all understanding;' peace, 'which the world cannot give, nor take away.' Grace and Mercy descend first in the train of infinite blessings, 'from God our Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ;' and Peace enters our doors immediately behind them. A guest fresh from heaven, and from the presence of God, Peace bears all the characteristics of the world from which she descends, of the region in which she was born, of the family to which she is allied, and of the Parent from whom she sprang. Gentle and serene, beautiful and lovely, she becomes a willing companion to every humble, faithful follower of the Lamb to every genuine child of God. Her own angelic disposition she breathes insensibly into the soul, her

softness and gentleness she infuses into the heart, and her living smiles she spreads over the aspect. At once the man is changed into a new creature. His soul, before the region of darkness and storm, is cleared at once of the clouds by which it was overcast. Its tempestuous passions cease to rage and ravage, and a heavenly sunshine illumines the world within. The universe, to him heretofore a vast kingdom of war and opposition, is converted into a delightful residence of quiet and harmony, in which an immense multitude of the inhabitants, such as 'no man can number,' are become his friends, and in which the hostilities of the rest will only work together for his good. God also, seen by him before in 'clouds and darkness,' which were 'very tempestuous round about him,' has unfolded to him the light of his countenance, and given him a lively and transporting earnest of serene, unclouded, everlasting day.

SERMON LXXXV.

REGENERATION.

ITS CONSEQUENCES. JOY IN THE HOLY GHOST.

For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.—Rom xiv. 17.

ON the last Sabbath, I considered the nature and importance of spiritual peace. I shall proceed to examine another consequence of regeneration; viz. *joy in the Holy Ghost.*

In the text the apostle declares, that 'the kingdom of God' is formed of 'righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.' By this kingdom he intends plainly, not the kingdom of creation, nor the kingdom of providence, nor, in a strict sense, what is usually called the kingdom of grace. The word

kingdom is here used in a figurative manner; and denotes the effects of that secret, invisible, incomprehensible, influence over the hearts of mankind, which is exerted by the Spirit of grace in the work of sanctification. This influence is the great engine of the divine government over the hearts of intelligent beings; and is often with the utmost propriety termed in the gospel the kingdom of God. Of this influence, 'righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost,' are *effects* primarily important; and in the text are, figuratively, called by a name which, in simple language, would properly belong to the *cause* of their existence. In a similar manner is the term used by Christ, Luke xvii. 20, 'The kingdom of God cometh not with observation; neither shall they say concerning it, Lo here, or, Lo there: for the kingdom of God is within you.'

Of these three great effects of the energy of the divine Spirit, the first, viz. *righteousness*, here used for holiness or evangelical virtue, is in the soul the cause of the two last. From righteousness, in this sense, spring, of course, the peace and joy of the spiritual character. 'Joy in the Holy Ghost,' therefore, is obviously a consequence of regeneration. In the text, as well as in the order of nature, it is subjoined to peace; although we are ever to remember that they always exist together in the same mind, and at the same time.

In examining this subject, the following considerations have occurred to me, as particularly deserving the attention of a religious assembly.

I. *The joy spoken of in the text is not a mere natural joy.*

By *natural* joy, I intend the pleasure which is found by the mind in natural or physical good, whether possessed, or expected. Such is the pleasure which we experience in property, health, friends, food, and other gratifications of a similar nature. Such is the pleasure found in the contemplation of beauty, novelty, and greatness; in the multitude, variety, and sublimity of the works of creation and

providence ; or in the skill, power, and wisdom displayed by their Author. Such also is the satisfaction experienced in the mere belief that God is reconciled to us, and become our friend and benefactor.

All these I acknowledge to be innocent and lawful enjoyments. I acknowledge them to be enjoyments which we are not merely permitted, but required to experience ; and to be enjoyments also, in greater or less degrees, experienced by every sanctified mind. Still they may be possessed in a manner merely natural, and by a mind utterly destitute of the evangelical character. When the Christian rejoices in these things, he rejoices virtuously, because he regards them with just views. But when a sinner rejoices in them, he regards them with erroneous views, and with emotions destitute of virtue. Evangelical joy in these things is one of ‘ the fruits of the Spirit.’ But nothing experienced by a sinner can be a peculiar characteristic of a Christian. Nor is any genuine fruit of the Spirit ever found in an unsanctified mind.

II. *Joy in the Holy Ghost is, however, joy in God.*

God is the only solid foundation of joy to the universe ; and is seen and acknowledged in this character by every virtuous being. In this most pleasing and most magnificent manner he is every where exhibited in the Scriptures. ‘ Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous!’ says the psalmist, Psal. xxxiii. 1.—‘ Thou shalt rejoice in the Lord,’ saith the prophet Isaiah, ‘ and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel,’ Isa. xli. 16.—‘ I will greatly rejoice in the Lord ; my soul shall be joyful in my God ;’ saith our Saviour, Isa. lxi. 10.—‘ Be glad, then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God,’ saith Joel, chap. ii. 23.—‘ Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine ; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat ; the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stall : yet I will rejoice in the Lord ; I will joy in the God of my salvation,

Hab. iii. 17, 18. The same language is adopted by the Virgin Mary and by St. Paul in the New Testament; and is applied by Christ to the apostles, and to the whole body of Christians, either as an account of facts, or as a precept directing their duty

To revelation, reason joins her fullest testimony and easily discerns, when informed of the true character of God by revelation, that in him the proper, rational, supreme, and eternal joy of his intelligent creatures must ultimately centre; and that he is the object to be thus enjoyed, as well as the source whence this enjoyment flows. The eternal, unchangeable, almighty, all-knowing, the infinitely just, faithful, true, benevolent, and merciful mind is, in an infinite degree, a more beautiful, lovely, and glorious object in itself, than any or than all others. Of such a mind, all the conduct, all the manifestations, are accordant with its true and essential nature; are beautiful, glorious, lovely, like itself. These amazing considerations are also enhanced, in a manner literally boundless, by the great fact, that from this mind sprang all the objects of admiration and delight which are found in the universe.

In the *power* of God we are presented with an everlasting and unlimited source of joy; when it is considered as perfect sufficiency for every great and good purpose; for the accomplishment of whatever wisdom can approve, or virtue delight in; and for the accomplishment of this in the manner which is perfectly desirable.

In the *knowledge* of God there is an endless source of delight; as the original spring, whence have flowed the innumerable beings and events of the universe; together with their attributes, operations, and effects. In the perpetually diversified structure, the wonderful purposes, and the no less wonderful uses, of these, is the state of the infinite mind, as the origin of whatever is great and good, presented to us in a manner perfect in itself, and endlessly delightful to every virtuous beholder. The

mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms even of this world are full of these displays; and the structure, powers, and operations of a single being furnish a field of investigation altogether too wide for the comprehension of any human understanding.

In the *bounty* of God we behold an amazing source of gratitude, and of the pleasure always found in that most amiable and delightful emotion. We here discern ample provision made for our continuance in being; for our daily wants, and for all our reasonable wishes. Our food and raiment are most liberally supplied, our innocent desires most richly gratified; our taste delighted with the beauty, novelty, and grandeur of the world around us; our eyes charmed with the glorious prospects of the earth and the heavens; and our ears feasted with melody and harmony.

In the *mercy* of God the soul is assured that its sins may be forgiven, and its nature renewed; is presented with the most illustrious proofs of divine love, and the overflowings of infinite tenderness towards a world of apostates. It is here furnished with the greatest and best gift of God, evangelical virtue; and beyond the grave is secured in the endless possession of unmingled and unfading happiness. From sin, its own most debased character, and from misery, its proper reward, it is here presented with a final deliverance, is instamped with the image of God, and admitted to the kingdom of the blessed.

In the truth and *faithfulness* of this perfect Being, the soul is furnished with entire security that his declarations are steadfast and immoveable, and that 'his promises endure for ever.' The encouragement given to it, therefore, of both present and future good, is encouragement on which perfect reliance may be placed, and with regard to which disappointment can never rise, either here or hereafter. When we remember, that one of these promises to Christians is, that 'all things shall be theirs;' and another, 'that all things shall work together for their good;

the importance of this consideration appears to be literally infinite. On these declarations the virtuous universe reposes with absolute safety, and with reliance which will strengthen for ever.

The *justice* of God is seen to be the immensely grand and awful, yet the immensely beneficial, administration of the vast kingdom of Jehovah. In the exercise of this glorious attribute are secured all the rights of intelligent creatures, and their infallible and complete protection from every ultimate wrong. The least right and the least wrong of the least individual are as firmly assured as the greatest interests of angels and archangels. By this amazing mind nothing is forgotten or unregarded. Lazarus, at the gate, is as effectually remembered as David on the throne, or Gabriel standing before God in the highest heavens.

Alone, and to a world of sinners, the justice of God would be only great and terrible; but harmonizing with mercy in all its dictates, it renders even to our view, the character of the great Possessor transcendently excellent and amiable. What would become of the universe, were God to be unjust? What creature would for a moment be safe; what interest uninvaded?

Of these glorious attributes we need not, in order to find displays, cast our eyes abroad into incomprehensible systems of worlds and beings. At home, by our fire-sides, in our friends, in our families, in our bodies, and in our minds, they are seen with high advantage and supreme endearment. Are we fed? The hand which feeds us is that of our heavenly Father. Are we clothed? He made the flax to grow, he formed the fleece, he gave the silkworm skill to spin her mysterious thread, and brought to us the necessary and beautiful materials to form our attire. Are we in health? He preserves in their pristine strength the numerous powers of our bodies, sends the stream of life through our veins, and animates our hearts with wonderful and unceasing energy. Do we see? He contrived the eye. Do

we hear? He fashioned the ear. Do we think, and choose, and feel? He lighted up the lamp of reason in our minds. Are we and ours virtuous? He poured out the Spirit of sanctification upon our minds. Have we enjoyments? He provided them. Have we hopes? They all sprang from his bounty, and are secured by his unchangeable promise.

All these divine considerations are enhanced beyond measure by the nature of those attributes which may be termed qualifications of these. The *omnipresence* of God teaches us that all these perfections are every where present, every where ready to be employed in the production of good. His *immutability* proves to us that these perfections will never be changed in their nature, degree, and operations; and that, as he has thus acted, so he will always act in the same manner. The *eternity* of God shews us that these perfections will know no end; and that therefore the enjoyments of his children will endure for ever. Thus, what God is here, he is every where; what he is now, he will be through eternity.

In the venerable and endearing characters of the *Father*, the *Redeemer*, and the *Sanctifier* of mankind, God appears as the source of peculiar joy. As the *Father* of mankind, he appears as a sovereign and lawgiver, offended by our rebellion, but with infinite kindness proffering to us forgiveness and reconciliation; as sending for this benevolent end his beloved Son to expiate our sins, and his Holy Spirit to renew our hearts and lives; and thus as opening his arms unasked and undesired, to receive his penitent and returning children.

In the endearing character of the *Son* he appears with boundless benignity, as 'making an end of sin finishing transgression, and bringing in everlasting righteousness;' as becoming man, that we might again be united to God; as dying that we might live; as rising from the dead, ascending to heaven assuming the government of all things, and interceding before the throne of infinite majesty, that we

might rise hereafter incorruptible and immortal. might follow him to the heavens, enjoy the infinite blessings of his administration, and be accepted as his faithful friends at the final day. Christ is 'the corner stone' of this living and glorious building formed, according to the glowing language of St. Peter, of 'living stones, a spiritual house of God, eternal in the heavens.' On him, the sole foundation, the vast structure is erected, to stand for ever.

By the *Spirit of truth* is this mighty work completed. With infinite kindness and patience he awakens, convinces, renews, and purifies the soul; forms it for endless holiness and endless life; and conducts it through this earthly wilderness to the land of promise beyond the grave.

In all these things united, is the *love* of God seen with supreme advantage, as immense, unchanging, and eternal; as endeared with all possible tenderness, as overcoming the most perverse obstinacy, as forgiving the greatest guilt, as flowing out to enemies and apostates condemned by unerring justice, and discarded by the virtuous universe.

To the *Christian*, in all these respects, is God the source of supreme and unceasing joy. As a Christian, he has become a new creature, entered into a new creation, and enrolled himself as a subject of a new and immortal kingdom. This kingdom is a kingdom in which will be progressively accomplished universal, entire, and everlasting good. For this end it was created. To this end it is uniformly conducted by the all-pervading, all-ruling hand of Jehovah. The subjects of it are universally 'children of light.' Their intercourse is an endless succession of diversified virtue and loveliness. Purity, dignity, and excellence, are their inherent characteristics, and everlasting happiness and glory their final destination. In all that they are, in all that they do and in all that is done to them, God himself rejoices with intense and eternal joy.

With this new kingdom the Christian has begun an everlasting connexion. His union to the members

of it and his intercourse with them, instead of terminating, will unceasingly become more intimate, more endearing, more exalted. The views of their minds and his are destined to become perpetually more and more just and comprehensive; their affections and his to be more pure, intense, and noble; their mutual friendship to be more sweet and serene; and their conduct to be, in an unceasing gradation, such as is proper to be exhibited in the house and presence of God.

In accordance with this state of things, therefore, will the whole scheme of the Christian's future being be formed. His plans will of course be concerted in such a manner as to embrace and promote eternal purposes. They will be the plans of an immortal being, destined to act with immortal beings in a boundless field of existence; the plans of a dutiful and faithful subject of the infinite ruler; of a child, warmed with perpetual and filial piety to his divine parent; of a brother, finally united to 'the household which is named after Christ;' of a redeemed, sanctified, returning prodigal, brought back, with infinite compassion and infinite expense, to the house of his father, and welcomed with exquisite joy by the family of the first-born. To glorify God, to bless his fellow-creatures, and to be blessed by both, will be the combined and perfect end for which he lives. This end he will pursue in a world where no obstructions ever arise, where no toil ever wearies, where no disappointments ever intrude, where no temptations ever arrest, and where no enemies ever alarm; where his affections cannot be too intense, nor his pursuits too ardent; and where his only professional business will be to be virtuous and happy. As a citizen of this new and heavenly kingdom, the Christian begins his course of spiritual life. All these things are already become his. God is his Father, Christ his Redeemer, the Spirit of grace his Sanctifier, and all the children of virtue are his brethren. In the present world he is only a stranger and a sojourner; he regards it, therefore, as a mere

lodging, and fixes his eye on heaven as his home.

With this new character, all things with which he here converses assume to his eye a new aspect, and are filled with the presence and agency of God. 'The heavens declare his glory, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.' 'The year,' in all its revolutions, 'is crowned with his goodness.' The spring is his beauty, blooming in endless varieties of elegance and splendour. Summer and autumn are manifestations of his bounty, filling his creatures with good. The winter is a solemn display of his majesty. Then 'the Lord hath his way in the whirlwind, and in the storm; and the clouds are the dust of his feet.'

In his own blessings the Christian sees God in a manner still more delightful. His blessings are not mere enjoyments; they are gifts, unspeakably endeared by the hand from which they flow. When he is in prosperity, 'the Lord is his Shepherd, who maketh him to lie down in green pastures, and leadeth him beside the still waters; who prepareth a table before him in the presence of his enemies; who anointeth his head with oil; who causeth his cup to run over, and goodness and mercy to follow him all the days of his life.' Is he in adversity? 'The rod and staff of the same Shepherd support and comfort him.' Is he in doubt and darkness, where he is scarcely able to trace the path of life? He hears 'a voice behind him, saying, This is the way; walk thou therein.' Is he mourning in Zion? 'God appoints to him beauty for ashes, and the oil of joy for mourning.' Is he sick? God is his physician? and has already taught him to say, 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul; and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.' Has he come to a dying bed? Christ has vanquished death and the grave; and has taught him to sing at their approach, 'O Death! where is thy sting? O Grave! where is thy victory?' Has

he friends? 'God has raised them up.' Has he children? They 'are an heritage from the Lord.' Is the land of his nativity safe? God is 'a wall of fire round about it.' Does religion flourish? God is 'the glory in the midst of it.' The church to which he is united is 'a garden, which the Lord hath planted.' Is it enlightened, quickened, and edified? It 'is not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts.' Is it comforted? The consolations have come down from the heavenly Comforter. Is it protected? 'The Lord hath created upon Mount Zion, and upon all her assemblies, a cloud and a smoke by day, and a light of a flaming fire by night.'

Thus to the Christian all things in heaven and earth are full of God. Wherever he walks, wherever he is, he is surrounded with his presence; and in that presence there is 'abundance of joy.' To him in his meditations and in his worship he instinctively turns, as the supreme object of his affections and of his obedience. In loving, fearing, and serving him 'with all the heart,' he finds his chief delight; and becomes continually able, with more and more propriety and truth, to say, 'Whom have I in heaven, but thee? and there is none upon the earth whom I desire beside thee.'

III. *The Christian rejoices in spiritual things universally.*

Spiritual things are those in which the power of the Spirit of grace is peculiarly visible, and which, therefore, have a peculiar tendency to improve us in the Christian character. In all things of this nature the Christian finds a peculiar joy. Particularly in the word of God he discovers multiplied streams of pure and increasing pleasure. Here all the transporting things already mentioned are made known to mankind. Here are disclosed the character, designs, and works, of the Creator: the rebellion, guilt, and condemnation of man, and his restoration by forgiving, redeeming, and sanctifying love. Here the means of grace and salvation are revealed, the truths

which we are to believe, and the precepts which we are to obey. Here 'life and immortality are brought to light' by the Redeemer, and the path which leads to them is pointed out by the finger of God. The Bible is a window in this prison of hope, through which we look into eternity. It is the door of heaven opened by a divine hand, through which we cast our view into that glorious region, and behold the beauty, splendour, and happiness, which reign and triumph there for ever.

Here the Christian finds himself most mercifully checked, in the hour of temptation, by the threatenings of the law, and divinely allured to righteousness by promises and invitations. Behind him, justice displays its flaming sword, to prevent him from returning to the by-paths of sin. Before him mercy calls, with the music of heaven and the smile of infinite love, to quicken his course in the highway of holiness.

In the *worship* of the same glorious Being, the same delight is experienced, and with enhanced enjoyment. In his *closet* like Moses, he 'converses with God face to face'; and, while he spreads all his wants and woes, all his sins and dangers, all his hopes and joys, before him, is assured of an 'open reward.' In his *family*, when his nearest connexions are around him, he finds every comfort endeared by these beloved objects, and sweetened by the remembrance, that his house is a house of God. In the *sanctuary* he unites with his fellow-christians to ask counsel at the mercy-seat, and to present before it prayers and praises, refined and exalted by evangelical sympathy. Here, also, all his virtuous affections and purposes are purified and strengthened by the heavenly influence of the holy day, and the holy place. Here grace is given, and glory anticipated.

At the *table of Christ*, and in the celebration of *baptism*, his soul is refreshed and revived by the sight of the dying Saviour expiating his sins, and of the Spirit of God, symbolically poured out as a divine cleansing, to purify his heart from moral pollu-

tion. Earth here borrows the aspect of heaven, and sublunary things are invested with no small degree of immortal beauty.

In the *church of God*, he sees a real though imperfect picture of 'the general assembly of the first-born.' All Christians are his brethren, and fellow-travellers with him towards the heavenly kingdom in 'the strait and narrow way that leads to life.' Their character, their hearts, their interests, their designs, are one. They are members of one family. They have 'one Father, even God;' they have 'one Lord,' even Christ; they have one Sanctifier, and one Comforter, even 'the Spirit of grace.' Their hopes and fears, their doubts and discoveries, their joys and sorrows, are the same. On all the same divine image is instamped, the same evangelical beauty is visible. 'Lovely and pleasant in their lives, in their death they are not divided.'

IV. *The Christian finds an exalted pleasure in the good enjoyed by others.*

In his view no truth is clearer than that 'it is more blessed to give than to receive.' With this truth he cheerfully accords; and finds, in doing good to others, a humble share of the same delight which is enjoyed by the universal Benefactor, in the overflowings of infinite beneficence to the creation. Nor is his enjoyment less exquisite, when good is done by those around him. In them, as in him, real disinterested beneficence is a proof of sanctification. If the beneficence be not disinterested, he still possesses the joy of seeing his fellow-creatures made happy.

In the diffusion of the divine beneficence also, he experiences a perpetual delight, while he beholds the illustrious exhibitions of the goodness of God, and shares in the comfort of all on whom it descends. Especially is this enjoyment exquisite when sinners are 'brought out of darkness into marvellous light, and from the power of Satan unto God.' Then souls guilty and debased, condemned and ruined, are redeemed from everlasting sin and woe. Then

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In the *knowledge* of God there is an endless source of delight; as the original spring, whence have flowed the innumerable beings and events of the universe; together with their attributes, operations, and effects. In the perpetually diversified structure, the wonderful purposes, and the no less wonderful uses, of these, is the state of the infinite mind, as the origin of whatever is great and good, presented to us in a manner perfect in itself, and endlessly delightful to every virtuous beholder. The

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might rise hereafter incorruptible and immortal. might follow him to the heavens, enjoy the infinite blessings of his administration, and be accepted as his faithful friends at the final day. Christ is 'the corner stone' of this living and glorious building formed, according to the glowing language of St. Peter, of 'living stones, a spiritual house of God, eternal in the heavens.' On him, the sole foundation, the vast structure is erected, to stand for ever.

By the *Spirit of truth* is this mighty work completed. With infinite kindness and patience he awakens, convinces, renews, and purifies the soul; forms it for endless holiness and endless life; and conducts it through this earthly wilderness to the land of promise beyond the grave.

In all these things united, is the *love* of God seen with supreme advantage, as immense, unchanging, and eternal; as endeared with all possible tenderness, as overcoming the most perverse obstinacy, as forgiving the greatest guilt, as flowing out to enemies and apostates condemned by unerring justice, and discarded by the virtuous universe.

To the *Christian*, in all these respects, is God the source of supreme and unceasing joy. As a Christian, he has become a new creature, entered into a new creation, and enrolled himself as a subject of a new and immortal kingdom. This kingdom is a kingdom in which will be progressively accomplished universal, entire, and everlasting good. For this end it was created. To this end it is uniformly conducted by the all-pervading, all-ruling hand of Jehovah. The subjects of it are universally 'children of light.' Their intercourse is an endless succession of diversified virtue and loveliness. Purity, dignity, and excellence, are their inherent characteristics, and everlasting happiness and glory their final destination. In all that they are, in all that they do and in all that is done to them, God himself rejoices with intense and eternal joy.

With this new kingdom the Christian has begun an everlasting connexion. His union to the members

of it and his intercourse with them, instead of terminating, will unceasingly become more intimate, more endearing, more exalted. The views of their minds and his are destined to become perpetually more and more just and comprehensive; their affections and his to be more pure, intense, and noble; their mutual friendship to be more sweet and serene; and their conduct to be, in an unceasing gradation, such as is proper to be exhibited in the house and presence of God.

In accordance with this state of things, therefore, will the whole scheme of the Christian's future being be formed. His plans will of course be concerted in such a manner as to embrace and promote eternal purposes. They will be the plans of an immortal being, destined to act with immortal beings in a boundless field of existence; the plans of a dutiful and faithful subject of the infinite ruler; of a child, warmed with perpetual and filial piety to his divine parent; of a brother, finally united to 'the household which is named after Christ;' of a redeemed, sanctified, returning prodigal, brought back, with infinite compassion and infinite expense, to the house of his father, and welcomed with exquisite joy by the family of the first-born. To glorify God, to bless his fellow-creatures, and to be blessed by both, will be the combined and perfect end for which he lives. This end he will pursue in a world where no obstructions ever arise, where no toil ever wearies, where no disappointments ever intrude, where no temptations ever arrest, and where no enemies ever alarm; where his affections cannot be too intense, nor his pursuits too ardent; and where his only professional business will be to be virtuous and happy. As a citizen of this new and heavenly kingdom, the Christian begins his course of spiritual life. All these things are already become his. God is his Father, Christ his Redeemer, the Spirit of grace his Sanctifier, and all the children of virtue are his brethren. In the present world he is only a stranger and a sojourner; he regards it, therefore, as a mere

lodging, and fixes his eye on heaven as his home.

With this new character, all things with which he here converses assume to his eye a new aspect, and are filled with the presence and agency of God. 'The heavens declare his glory, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.' 'The year,' in all its revolutions, 'is crowned with his goodness.' The spring is his beauty, blooming in endless varieties of elegance and splendour. Summer and autumn are manifestations of his bounty, filling his creatures with good. The winter is a solemn display of his majesty. Then 'the Lord hath his way in the whirlwind, and in the storm; and the clouds are the dust of his feet.'

In his own blessings the Christian sees God in a manner still more delightful. His blessings are not mere enjoyments; they are gifts, unspeakably endeared by the hand from which they flow. When he is in prosperity, 'the Lord is his Shepherd, who maketh him to lie down in green pastures, and leadeth him beside the still waters; who prepareth a table before him in the presence of his enemies; who anointeth his head with oil; who causeth his cup to run over, and goodness and mercy to follow him all the days of his life.' Is he in adversity? 'The rod and staff of the same Shepherd support and comfort him.' Is he in doubt and darkness, where he is scarcely able to trace the path of life? He hears 'a voice behind him, saying, This is the way; walk thou therein.' Is he mourning in Zion? 'God appoints to him beauty for ashes, and the oil of joy for mourning.' Is he sick? God is his physician? and has already taught him to say, 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul; and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.' Has he come to a dying bed? Christ has vanquished death and the grave; and has taught him to sing at their approach, 'O Death! where is thy sting? O Grave! where is thy victory?' Has

he friends? 'God has raised them up.' Has he children? They 'are an heritage from the Lord.' Is the land of his nativity safe? God is 'a wall of fire round about it.' Does religion flourish? God is 'the glory in the midst of it.' The church to which he is united is 'a garden, which the Lord hath planted.' Is it enlightened, quickened, and edified? It 'is not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts.' Is it comforted? The consolations have come down from the heavenly Comforter. Is it protected? 'The Lord hath created upon Mount Zion, and upon all her assemblies, a cloud and a smoke by day, and a light of a flaming fire by night.'

Thus to the Christian all things in heaven and earth are full of God. Wherever he walks, wherever he is, he is surrounded with his presence; and in that presence there is 'abundance of joy.' To him in his meditations and in his worship he instinctively turns, as the supreme object of his affections and of his obedience. In loving, fearing, and serving him 'with all the heart,' he finds his chief delight; and becomes continually able, with more and more propriety and truth, to say, 'Whom have I in heaven, but thee? and there is none upon the earth whom I desire beside thee.'

III. *The Christian rejoices in spiritual things universally.*

Spiritual things are those in which the power of the Spirit of grace is peculiarly visible, and which, therefore, have a peculiar tendency to improve us in the Christian character. In all things of this nature the Christian finds a peculiar joy. Particularly in the word of God he discovers multiplied streams of pure and increasing pleasure. Here all the transporting things already mentioned are made known to mankind. Here are disclosed the character, designs, and works, of the Creator: the rebellion, guilt, and condemnation of man, and his restoration by forgiving, redeeming, and sanctifying love. Here the means of grace and salvation are revealed, the truths

which we are to believe, and the precepts which we are to obey. Here 'life and immortality are brought to light' by the Redeemer, and the path which leads to them is pointed out by the finger of God. The Bible is a window in this prison of hope, through which we look into eternity. It is the door of heaven opened by a divine hand, through which we cast our view into that glorious region, and behold the beauty, splendour, and happiness, which reign and triumph there for ever.

Here the Christian finds himself most mercifully checked, in the hour of temptation, by the threatenings of the law, and divinely allured to righteousness by promises and invitations. Behind him, justice displays its flaming sword, to prevent him from returning to the by-paths of sin. Before him mercy calls, with the music of heaven and the smile of infinite love, to quicken his course in the highway of holiness.

In the *worship* of the same glorious Being, the same delight is experienced, and with enhanced enjoyment. In his *closet* like Moses, he 'converses with God face to face'; and, while he spreads all his wants and woes, all his sins and dangers, all his hopes and joys, before him, is assured of an 'open reward.' In his *family*, when his nearest connexions are around him, he finds every comfort endear- ed by these beloved objects, and sweetened by the remembrance, that his house is a house of God. In the *sanctuary* he unites with his fellow-christians to ask counsel at the mercy-seat, and to present before it prayers and praises, refined and exalted by evangelical sympathy. Here, also, all his virtuous affec- tions and purposes are purified and strengthened by the heavenly influence of the holy day, and the holy place. Here grace is given, and glory anticipated.

At the *table of Christ*, and in the celebration of *baptism*, his soul is refreshed and revived by the sight of the dying Saviour expiating his sins, and of the Spirit of God, symbolically poured out as a di- vine cleansing, to purify his heart from moral pollu-

tion. Earth here borrows the aspect of heaven, and sublunary things are invested with no small degree of immortal beauty.

In the *church of God*, he sees a real though imperfect picture of 'the general assembly of the first-born.' All Christians are his brethren, and fellow-travellers with him towards the heavenly kingdom in 'the strait and narrow way that leads to life.' Their character, their hearts, their interests, their designs, are one. They are members of one family. They have 'one Father, even God;' they have 'one Lord,' even Christ; they have one Sanctifier, and one Comforter, even 'the Spirit of grace.' Their hopes and fears, their doubts and discoveries, their joys and sorrows, are the same. On all the same divine image is instamped, the same evangelical beauty is visible. 'Lovely and pleasant in their lives, in their death they are not divided.'

IV. *The Christian finds an exalted pleasure in the good enjoyed by others.*

In his view no truth is clearer than that 'it is more blessed to give than to receive.' With this truth he cheerfully accords; and finds, in doing good to others, a humble share of the same delight which is enjoyed by the universal Benefactor, in the overflowings of infinite beneficence to the creation. Nor is his enjoyment less exquisite, when good is done by those around him. In them, as in him, real disinterested beneficence is a proof of sanctification. If the beneficence be not disinterested, he still possesses the joy of seeing his fellow-creatures made happy.

In the diffusion of the divine beneficence also, he experiences a perpetual delight, while he beholds the illustrious exhibitions of the goodness of God, and shares in the comfort of all on whom it descends. Especially is this enjoyment exquisite when sinners are 'brought out of darkness into marvellous light, and from the power of Satan unto God.' Then souls guilty and debased, condemned and ruined, are redeemed from everlasting sin and woe. Then

heaven is enlarged by the accession of new inhabitants; and the joy which is felt in that benevolent world over repenting sinners, trembles delightfully through his own bosom. The sight of a sanctified mind, of a redeemed and forgiven sinner, of endless virtue and immortal life begun, is the fairest and most enchanting prospect ever seen in the great kingdom of Jehovah.

V. *The joy of the Christian in this world is the beginning of everlasting joy.*

'To be spiritually minded is both life and peace. This mind is the mind of every Christian. Of course, 'life and peace' eternal are begun in him, while he resides in this evil and melancholy world.

There are indeed many interruptions, diminutions, and preventions of this glorious possession accomplished by remaining sin, and its inseparable companion, 'sorrow of heart.' But in the midst of all these he finds consolation, often abundant, almost unceasing, and always sufficient for his wants. The promises of the gospel are continually before him. God, he knows, 'will never leave him, nor forsake him.' Christ, he knows, will 'always be with him unto the end.' He may indeed be 'cast down,' but he will not be 'destroyed:' he may be 'afflicted,' but he will not be 'forsaken.' The Father of his spirit may indeed 'smite him in his wrath for a small moment, yet with everlasting kindness will he have mercy on him.' In every gloomy and distressing day, there will be gleams of sunshine, and openings of a serene, unclouded heaven. 'In the dry and thirsty ground, where there is apparently no water,' and in the midst of a desolation visibly without limits, 'the wilderness will suddenly rejoice and blossom as the rose.'

His piety is a seed sown here in an unkind, barren soil, indeed, and under a wintry climate; but it will live, and grow, until it shall be transplanted to a happier region, beneath a more friendly sky; where it will shoot forth in its native strength and beauty. The flame of divine love kindled feebly in his heart

will never cease to burn, until it shall rise and glow with unextinguishable ardour beyond the grave. The light which here dawns in darkness, and feebly illumines the surrounding gloom, will perpetually 'shine brighter and brighter, unto the perfect day.' All his sins and sorrows will continually lessen, and recede, and fade; all his graces, consolations, and hopes, will expand and improve; until the imperfect good which he finds in this 'vale of tears,' shall be lost in the everlasting beauty, happiness, and glory of heaven.

SERMON LXXXVI.

REGENERATION.

ITS CONSEQUENCES. INCREASE OF GRACE.

The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.—PROV. iv. 18.

IN the last Discourse I considered at large the fourth consequence of regeneration. I shall now proceed to examine two other consequences of this great change in man, commonly termed, *increase of grace*, and *perseverance to the end*.

In the text, the progress of the renewed man in holiness of character, is compared to the dawning light of the morning; which, barely perceptible at first, increases by gradations also barely perceptible, until the sun, ascending above the horizon, sheds over the face of the earth the full beams of day.

By this image we are naturally taught the following things:—

I. *That the holiness of the Christian is a beautiful object:*

II. *That it increases as he advances in life:*

III. *That it continues to the end.*

I. *The holiness of the Christian is a beautiful object.*

The views which David, who uttered the instructions contained in this chapter, and which Solomon, who under the influence of inspiration repeated them

to us, formed of this evangelical subject, are sufficiently manifested in the text. It is here compared to the most beautiful of all the objects in the natural world, presented to us in the most beautiful form; viz. the light of the sun succeeding the darkness of the night, and advancing, through a most elegant and delightful progress, to the splendour of the perfect day. What this illustrious object is in the natural system, the holiness of the Christian is in the moral system.

In a similar manner it is spoken of throughout the Scriptures. It is styled by Christ 'the pearl of great price' It is said by David to be 'more precious than thousands of gold, and of silver.' It is said by Job, that 'it cannot be gotten for gold; that silver shall not be weighed for the price thereof; that it cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, the precious onyx, or the sapphire; that no mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls; that the price of wisdom is above rubies;' and that its fame has been repeated in the regions of death and destruction. It is styled by Moses 'the beauty and glory of God' himself. 'Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children; and let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us.'

In conformity to these declarations, those who possess this character are styled, 'the excellent of the earth, in whom God delights;'—'chosen;'—'wise;'—'children of God;'—'followers of Christ;'—'born of the Spirit;'—'the precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold;'—'children of light;'—'heirs of God; and brethren of Christ.' In all these appellations, the moral beauty, the loveliness of mind possessed by Christians, as it appears to the eye of God, is strongly conspicuous; and its inestimable value is exhibited in the most forcible terms of which language is capable.

When we consider this subject in its own proper nature, and as viewed by human reason, we cannot but acknowledge the justice of the scriptural representations. The Spirit infused into man at his re-

novation has been heretofore exhibited as the only voluntary source of happiness. This being admitted, as by unbiassed reason it must be, no other words can adequately describe either the excellence, the beauty, or the loveliness of this disposition. Its value is of course proportioned to the good of which it is the spring; and to this no limits can be affixed. In whatever degree it exists, and however humble it may be, it still partakes of the common nature. The gold may exist in particles of dust; still it is gold; and superior, both in value and lustre, to all the dross in the universe. He who consecrates his faculties, however small they may be, to the glory of God, and the good of the intelligent creation, possesses the angelic character; and is not an angel only because his powers are inferior, and his disposition mixed, and hitherto imperfect.

But there is something still to be added to the beauty of the Christian character. The Christian, as has been uniformly taught in these Discourses, is in this world imperfectly holy. From his remaining sin arise to him many circumstances incompatible with a state of perfection. Many temptations, many difficulties, and many sorrows spring up in his progress towards heaven, which a glorified spirit cannot know. In his struggles with these, in the resolution with which he meets and encounters his spiritual enemies, in his contentions with 'the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,' in his steady dependance on God, in his faithful prayers for divine aid; in his patience, submission, and fortitude under sufferings, in his firm faith in the divine promises, and in his cheerful resignation of himself into the hands of God, there is often manifested a beauty and amiableness of character which is probably seen in no other world beside this; but which must be approved and admired in every world where wisdom is allowed to decide.

In all the meek and lowly virtues of the Christian character, there is something pre-eminently delightful and endearing. I know not whether there is any

character more strikingly beautiful and lovely than that of a penitent. Children, it seems to me, never interest us so deeply by any amiableness, and are never regarded with such peculiar endearment, as when they come to us with an ingenuous, cordial sorrow for their faults, a cheerful confession, and unfeigned designs of amendment. Such, in a peculiar degree, is the charming aspect of Christian penitence. On it 'the High and Lofty One, who inhabiteth eternity,' has declared himself pleased to 'look,' and over it the joy of heaven is exquisitely enhanced.

II. *The holiness of the Christian increases as he advances in life.*

The very nature of the subject leads us, in a sense irresistibly, to the adoption of this doctrine. The regeneration of the Christian, is his moral infancy. If we suppose him to live through even a moderate period after he is renewed, it is incredible that his holiness should not increase in strength. The evangelical powers (if I may call them such), as certainly increase by the progress of time, and by successive exercise, as the natural powers. Indeed, the increase of the natural powers is, of course, an increase of those which are evangelical. Every illumination of the mind, every new degree of capacity which it acquires by thinking, for more just and comprehensive thought, renders the intellect more vigorous for every future exertion. The word of God is to the Christian the chief object of intellectual investigation. The truths which it reveals are those on which he especially loves to dwell, and about which his mind is peculiarly enlightened by successive inquiry. It is here that his capacity is enlarged, and his intellectual strength increased.

In a manner equally natural, his affections also improve in their energy. Parents love their children more intensely, because they have loved them long. In the same manner friendship is continually strengthened by time; and in the same manner all ~~our~~ other affections. What is true of these is equally

true of evangelical affections. They also in their own nature become more firm, more vigorous, more operative, from the mere fact that they are often exercised. So far as experience teaches us, or reason is able to divine, all the powers of intelligent beings, by a common law, increase in their strength whenever they are regularly exercised.

With these dictates of reason those of the Scriptures perfectly harmonize. Were this not the fact, however plain the conclusions of reason might seem, they would probably fall short of satisfying a solicitous inquirer into this subject. By the Scriptures every question concerning religion is to be decided: and happily the decision in the present case is complete. There we are taught, that 'the good seed,' the word of God, when sown in good ground, 'springs up and bears fruit thirty, sixty, and a hundred-fold.' There we are informed, that Christians 'abound more and more' in the various graces of the gospel; that the faith of the Thessalonians 'grew exceedingly;' that the love of every one of them 'abounded' towards their fellow-saints; and that the faith of the Romans increased in such a manner as to be 'spoken of throughout all the world.'

The prayers of St. Paul also for his fellow-Christians; prayers dictated, as you well remember, by the Spirit of God; perfectly coincide with this scheme. 'The Lord,' said he to the Thessalonians, 'make you to increase, and to abound, in love one towards another, and towards all men.' To the Colossians he says, 'We do not cease to pray for you, that ye may be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom, and spiritual understanding; that ye may walk worthy of the Lord, unto all well pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.' Of the same tenour are his petitions for Christians of other churches.

With these declarations and prayers, the commands given us in the Scriptures concerning this subject entirely agree. 'Giving all diligence,' says

the apostle Peter, 'add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity.' And again, 'Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.' 'This thing I do,' says St. Paul to the Philippians, 'forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ.' 'Brethren, be followers together of me.' Generally, it may be observed, that the precepts and exhortations given by St. Paul to the several churches, are of the same nature; the great object of them being to promote the advancement of Christians in holiness.

Finally: Of this advancement, thus made the subject of declarations, prayers, and precepts, the Christian is amply assured by promises abundantly found in the Scriptures. If he faithfully endeavours to improve himself in the divine life, if he humbly and fervently ask the blessing of God upon his labours, he knows that on the one hand the 'grace of God will be sufficient for him;' and on the other, that this almighty Friend 'will never leave him, nor forsake him.' That holy and good Spirit, the immediate Author of all his spiritual blessings, will dwell in him, will lead him, will help his infirmities; and finally and safely conduct him to the possession of his heavenly inheritance. Thus, while he faithfully 'waits on the Lord,' he will 'renew his strength; will run, and not be weary; will walk, and not faint.'

The truth of the doctrine under consideration may now be considered as removed beyond every doubt; if, indeed, any doubt can be supposed to have arisen concerning the subject. Still it is of no small importance that we not only receive the general proposition, but understand also the particulars of which it is constituted; the things of which this improvement of the Christian character consists. I observe therefore,

1. *That the Christian increases in divine knowledge.*
 Particularly, he will improve in *the knowledge of God.*

By this I do not intend, that he will advance in the philosophical knowledge of this great and glorious Being. In this knowledge he indeed may, and usually will, increase; and so may multitudes of those who are not Christians. The knowledge here intended is especially of a spiritual nature; that which is called by Solomon, 'the knowledge of the Holy;' the knowledge which our Saviour declares to be 'eternal life;' the knowledge which is possessed only by those who love God, and is essentially derived from their affection to him. As the Christian reads the Bible, which will ever be one of his favourite employments, he will find God, the great subject of it, every where exhibited to his view; and exhibited continually in lights ever varying from each other. In the succession, and in the comparison, of an endless multitude of passages, all of them diverse, and all of them instructive, he will continually gain new apprehensions of the greatness and wisdom, the goodness, mercy, and truth, of the Being from whom he derived his own existence, and from whom he received all his blessings.

These apprehensions will be enlarged and improved by his attention to the works of creation and providence. The works of God are always full of instruction to those who read and love his word. Every person who peruses the Psalms with attention, must have observed how much instruction, and what elevated affections and purposes, David acquired from this source. Here, like David, every devout mind will see clearly elucidated, the truth, reasonableness, and wisdom, of very many scriptural doctrines; the propriety, and excellence, of very many precepts; the cogency of very many motives to his duty; and the fulfilment of very many predictions and promises. These, in innumerable instances, although unregarded by men of this world, will force themselves hourly and irresistibly on the

eye of the Christian ; for they are all congenial with his wishes, hopes, and designs, and to dwell upon them will be his peculiar delight.

The dispensations of God to himself, his family, his friends, and his country, will in a peculiar manner cast a new light over all these interesting subjects. Whatever immediately concerns ourselves and ours, becomes of course an object of our minute attention. As it is more thoroughly studied, so it is necessarily better understood, than the same things contained in dispensations to others. In our own blessings and afflictions many exhibitions are made to us of the character of God, and many proofs of his wisdom, goodness, and truth are realized, which will hardly be derived from any other source. Here our Maker is seen in a thousand lights of providential care and kindness, as our Preserver and Benefactor ; as the proper object of ultimate hope and confidence, of which we should have known little or nothing from any other source. At the same time this knowledge is deeply endeared to us, or solemnly impressed, by the events which disclose it ; and is therefore deeply felt and long remembered. Hence it becomes a part of our current thoughts, and is ready to be applied on every proper occasion, to every useful purpose. In this manner the mind becomes enriched with a train of the most useful views, solid arguments, and important doctrines, which raise it from its former level to a nobler elevation on the scale of intelligent being, and furnish it for higher enjoyment and more extensive usefulness in the kingdom of its Maker.

In a similar manner Christians improve in the knowledge of their duty. All the duty of the Christian is originally learned from the Scriptures. As his acquaintance with this sacred volume enlarges, the precepts which comprise the whole of his duty are more and more known, remembered, compared, and made to elucidate each other. These from time to time he applies to his own practical concerns ; and thus, as they pass under his eye from day to day,

he learns more accurately the nature, extent, and spirituality of the precepts themselves, and the safest and best modes of applying them to the conduct of his life. In this manner the scriptural precepts may be said to be always at hand, always ready for use, so as to guide him safely and happily, in many cases where others would be compelled to struggle with doubt and perplexity.

It ought to be added, that the knowledge of the Christian, acquired immediately from Scripture and from his own experience, is greatly increased by the conversation of his fellow-christians, and by the valuable books written by wise and good men concerning the subjects of religion.

Finally : Christians greatly improve in the knowledge of *themselves*.

The importance of self-knowledge is so obvious, that the ancient heathen considered the precept which enjoins it as having descended from heaven. They were not deceived : for the Scriptures directly require us to 'examine ourselves,' to 'prove ourselves,' and to 'know ourselves.' A part of this knowledge, and that indispensable, is conveyed to us in the sacred canon ; and this the Christian makes more and more his own, by continually searching for it in that invaluable book. But indispensable as this knowledge is, it is comparatively of little importance to the Christian, until he has learned its proper import, by applying it to his own spiritual condition, to the discovery of his true character, to the detection of his sins, to the investigation of his duty, to the excitement of his fears, to the establishment of his hopes, the alleviation of his sorrows, and the increase of his joys. This knowledge the Christian can gain only by *self-examination* ; by looking daily into his heart, by scrutinizing his life, and by comparing all that he thinks, and feels, and says, and does, with the rules of his duty prescribed in the word of God.

In this manner the best of men will learn, that they are in many respects widely different beings

from what an ordinary and gross attention to this part of their duty would induce them to believe. They will discern that they commit many sins, where otherwise they would suppose themselves guilty of few; that many actions, which they have before thought innocent, are really sinful; that sinful actions are much more criminal than they have been accustomed to believe; that their virtuous actions are fewer, less meritorious, and less acceptable to God, than they have been ready to suppose; and that themselves are much farther than they have been aware from the perfection required by the Scriptures. In this very manner, there is reason to believe, St. Paul arrived at those just views of his own character which are expressed in the latter part of the seventh chapter of his Epistle to the Romans; and in this manner Christians in every age and country have acquired almost all the self-knowledge which they have ever possessed.

By these efforts the good man acquires much more just as well as more humble apprehensions of what he is; discerns that 'in many things' he and all others 'offend;' that in every thing he 'comes short of the praise,' that is, the approbation, 'of God;' that in his best services there is much to lament, and much to be forgiven; and that new zeal, watchfulness, faithfulness, and prayer, are daily demanded of him, both by his interest, and by his duty. At the same time he clearly perceives the indispensable necessity of being more humble, submissive, diligent, prayerful; less censorious towards others; less attentive to the little, and more to the great concerns of the Christian life; more patient, gentle, meek, and amiable; and more strenuous in his opposition to every lust, temptation, and enemy.

2. The Christian improves in all his affections.

By the great change which was made in his character, when of a sinner he became a Christian, styled in the Scriptures, regeneration, and denoted by several other names of an import generally similar, his affections were for the first time turned

from the world to God. At this period his spiritual views were very limited and imperfect, and his affections in an infantine state. Every exercise of them was a kind of novelty ; a thing to which he had not been accustomed, and therefore performed, if I may be allowed the term, crudely. Ardent, and even violent, they might be, and at times probably were, but not steady and firm ; partaking more of the sudden and desultory character of the natural passions, than of the settled energy of an established habit ; and resembling more in their operations the unequal efforts of a raw recruit, than the regular advance of a veteran. In every such case there is usually much of earth mingled with a little of heaven. Joys and sorrows, hopes and fears, at this time often, perhaps usually, abound, and those in some instances excessive. But we are apt to look in vain for a stable, uniform course of life ; the energy, which is customarily ready to act, and act with vigour ; the serious consideration, by which it is taught to operate usefully ; and the serenity, by which it is most naturally accompanied. In vain shall we here search, in ordinary cases, for that sober fear, which, always awake, most usefully warns us of the approach of temptation, and the danger of sin ; for that fixed hope, which ‘ quietly ’ as well as humbly ‘ waits for the salvation of God ; ’ for those calm and determined purposes of duty, which are unremittedly carried into execution ; and for those milder and more endearing joys, and that more regularly recurring peace, which are found by a mind well disciplined to the Christian life. Hope here is apt suddenly to give place to fear, and sometimes to despondency ; zeal, to be succeeded by indifference ; and the most brilliant sunshine to be overcast by clouds and gloom. It will be readily admitted, that such a state is in many respects undesirable.

As the Christian advances in his progress, all these things often, to say the least, are materially changed. The exercise of his pious affections, in-

stead of being new and occasional, becomes by frequent repetition a habit. His love to God is by degrees changed into the settled temper, the fixed energy of his soul. More calm, more uniform, though less violent, it acquires a strength, a stability, which nothing violent ever possessed. Where new and ardent converts will tremble, and bend, and even be overturned, he will stand immoveable; and will thus prove, that he is 'deeply rooted in faith.' Of the same fixed nature will be his affections towards his fellow-men. The benevolence, which is the fulfilment of the second command of the moral law, holds an even course in the mind of the Christian with his love to God, and increases in its stability and energy in the same manner, by becoming habitual. Originally the exercises of this affection, those at least which were vigorous, and therefore objects of particular attention to the mind, were occasional, and in a comparative sense solitary. Like all other occasional things, they were at times, weaker or stronger, according to the circumstances by which they were attended. They were also brought into existence, often at least, against motives of considerable efficacy, against the intrusion of other affections of a worldly nature; the power of prejudice, the calls of business, the care and the apprehended interests of one's family, the spirit of a sect or party, and the pride of self-consistency. The man also has hitherto known very imperfectly the pleasure which springs from the exercise of benevolence, and therefore very imperfectly realizes the pleasure which he may find in exercising it again. His former passions and habits still retain much of their ancient hold upon him, and still influence not a little of his conduct. Hence, his benevolence is in many instances greatly impeded, and in many others prevented perhaps from operating at all.

From all these disadvantages the Christian, in his progress through life, gradually escapes, and acquires gradually the contrary advantages. His

love to his fellow-men becomes by degrees a habit more and more fixed, uniform, and ever ready to operate. With every exercise it gains strength. The pleasure which it yields is more uniformly found, and exists in a higher degree. Hence it is more regularly exercised, and in all its exercises is more efficacious.

The same things are equally true of the Christian's opposition to sin. By the superior knowledge which he acquires of the nature of this 'evil and bitter thing,' and by his experience of the pain and sorrow which are its regular consequences, he learns to regard it with habitual hatred and fear. His eye therefore is watchfully open to mark the approach of temptation, and 'the appearance of evil.'

In a similar manner also increases the Christian's attachment to his duty. Attachment to our duty necessarily bears a direct proportion to our hatred of sin; for every voluntary or negligent omission of known duty is itself a sin. All our duty also is obedience to God; and our love to it increases of course with our love to God. 'This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.' The pleasure also of performing our duty, and the strength of habit generated by it, will lend their whole force to increase this attachment. But the time forbids me to expatiate on this part of the subject.

3. Christians improve also in purity, and amiableness of life.

If the things which have been observed under the former heads be admitted, this will be perceived to follow of course. He whose affections become better, will, in a sense necessarily, live a better life. Wherever love to God prevails in greater degrees, devotion, public, private, and secret, will regularly be performed in a manner more regular, more sincere, more pure, and more acceptable. Wherever love to man increases in strength, truth will be more exactly spoken, justice more uniformly done, beneficence more widely dif-

fused, and the forgiveness of enemies more cheerfully yielded. In persons of whom this is the character, the pain of self-denial will in a great measure vanish ; and to communicate to others our property and our services will be attended with little or none of that reluctance but too commonly visible even in good men. In a word, the Christian is taught by his own experience, as he had before been taught by his Saviour, that ‘ it is more blessed to give than to receive.’

It is however carefully to be remembered, that all these desirable things are wrought into the Christian’s mind and life *by the power of the Holy Spirit*. We ‘ work out our salvation with fear and trembling,’ when ‘ God works in us to will and to do of his good pleasure.’ Without the influence of this divine agent, nothing comparatively would be done ; but with it, the Christian will himself labour both vigorously and successfully. For his encouragement let him remember, that whenever he is himself willing to lay strong hold on his duty, and will seek for the assistance of this glorious agent, he has the best reason to believe that it will not be denied.

It ought also to be added in this place, that realizing views of the approach of death, judgment, and eternity, will have a powerful influence to quicken the efforts which the Christian makes for his advancement in holiness.

In conformity to these observations, we see Christians actually growing better and better as they advance through life. We see them more pious, more benevolent, more self-denying, more humble, more weaned from the world, more spiritually-minded, and universally possessed, in higher degrees, of the disposition which fits them to become inhabitants of heaven. It obviously costs them less to be meek under provocations, and patient under injuries, to part with their property, or employ their labour, for charitable purposes. The smaller troubles of life sit lighter upon them, and the greater

they endure with more resignation and fortitude. Universally, they are more solicitous concerning their duty, and less studious of their own convenience. There is therefore more to be approved, and less to be blamed, in the conduct of their lives.

It is not intended here that this is the regular and uniform tenor of the Christian life. The improvement of the Christian character is unquestionably, to a greater or less degree, irregular and interrupted; in some Christians indeed less, and in others more. Some backslide in a melancholy and shameful manner, and for periods comparatively long; while others appear to advance with a steady and regular approximation towards the measure of the perfect man.

Neither is it intended, that cold, careless, lazy Christians, will find the blessings which have been mentioned in this Discourse. 'The diligent hand maketh rich' in spiritual as well as in temporal good. He who wishes to secure these blessings must on the one hand watch and pray, and on the other, 'do whatsoever he findeth to do with his might.'

Among the attainments made by such as have been Christians for a length of time, I will mention one; and will then conclude the Discourse. This is, that they are almost universally *more catholic* than those who are young. By *catholic* here, I do not mean what in modern times is frequently meant by the word. This honourable term, like many others, has been purloined by men without worth, to denote and to ornament a part of their own unworthy character. It has been employed to designate a shameful indifference to truth and error, to virtue and sin. This is a direct contrast to the spirit of the men of whom I have been speaking. These men are more attached to truth, and more opposed to error; more ardent in their love to virtue, and their hatred of sin. But they are possessed of more gentleness and more charitableness in their thoughts, more candour in their judgments, more sweetness in their dispositions, and more evangelical tenderness and modera-

tion in their conduct. They are less ready to censure, and more pleased to commend. Truth they prize more for its own sake, and are less solicitous to ask from whom it comes. Error they oppose in all men, especially in themselves and their friends. Little things they value less, and great ones more. On the names so numerous found in the Christian world, and so highly valued by many who inhabit it, they place little importance. On the parties and sects which disgrace that world, they look only with disapprobation and regret. To real and evangelical worth they attach high consideration. Over the feuds and janglings, which have so extensively prevailed among the professed followers of Christ, and often about subjects of little moment, they cast an eye of compassion; and lament that those whom Christ has loved, for whom he died, who will finally be placed at the right hand of the Judge, and who will be united for ever in the friendship of heaven, should be kept asunder, alienated, engaged in contention, and at times even embarked in hostilities, for reasons which they will blush to recite before the last tribunal, and which will awaken shame, if shame can be awakened, in heaven itself.

These men furnish one illustrious practical proof, *that the holiness of Christians increases through life.*

SERMON LXXXVII.

REGENERATION.

ITS CONSEQUENCES. PERSEVERANCE.

The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.—PROV. iv. 18.

IN the preceding Discourse I observed, that the text naturally teaches us the following doctrines:—

I. *That the holiness of the Christian is a beautiful object;*

II. *That it increases as he advances in life,*

III. *That it continues to the end.*

The two first of these doctrines I have already examined. I will now proceed to a consideration of the third.

As this doctrine has been and still is vigorously disputed, it will be necessary to make it the subject of a particular examination. In doing this I shall first adduce several arguments as a direct proof of the doctrine; and shall then answer the principal objections.

1. *It is irrational to suppose that God would leave a work, towards which so much has been done, unaccomplished.*

To effectuate the salvation of such as believe in Christ, God has sent him to become incarnate, to live a life of humiliation and suffering, and to die upon the cross. He has raised him from the dead, exalted him to his own right hand, and constituted him at once an intercessor for his children, and the head over all things unto the church. He has also sent the Spirit of grace, to complete by his almighty energy this work of infinite mercy, in sanctifying, enlightening, and quickening the soul, and conducting it to heaven. Now, let me ask, Is it not in the nature of the case incredible, that Jehovah should commence and carry on this work with such an amazing apparatus of labour and splendour, and leave it unfinished? Is it not incredible, that an omniscient and omnipotent Being should form a purpose of this nature, should discover in this wonderful manner that he had it so much at heart, and should yet suffer himself to be frustrated in the end? Who can reconcile this supposition with the perfections of God?

2. *The continuance of saints in holiness follows irresistibly from their election.*

It is unnecessary for the purposes of this Discourse that I should inquire into the metaphysical nature of election. It is sufficient for my design, that saints are declared abundantly throughout the Scriptures

to 'be chosen of God.' Thus, Rev. xvii. 14, the angel declares to John, concerning the followers of the Lamb, that they are 'called, chosen, and faithful.' Thus, Luke xviii. 7, Christ, speaking of his followers, says, 'And shall not God avenge his own elect,' or chosen? Thus St. Paul, Rom. viii. 33, 'Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?' Thus St. Peter, in his first Epistle, chap. ii. 9, 'Ye are a chosen generation:' and thus throughout the Scriptures.

It is to be remembered that this appellation is given to Christians *universally*. In the passages already quoted it is plain, that the names *elect* and *chosen*, which you know are the same in the Greek, are equivalent to *saints*, or *Christians*; and accordingly are addressed to them without distinction. The same observation is, with the same truth, applicable to the numerous passages of Scripture in which this language is adopted.

Of all these persons it is often said, that they were 'chosen from the beginning;' or 'from before the foundation of the world.' Thus St. Paul, 2 Thess. ii. 13, addressing the members of that church, says, 'God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth.' Thus also, Eph. i. 4, the same apostle, addressing the Christians at Ephesus, says, 'According as he hath chosen us in him (that is, Christ) before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.' From these passages, and from many others of similar import, it is clear, that Christians are 'chosen by God unto salvation from the beginning;' or 'from before the foundation of the world.' But can it be supposed that a purpose of God, thus formed, will be frustrated? As this is declared of Christians *as such*, it is evident that it is alike applicable to *all* Christians. If, therefore, any Christian ceases to be holy, this purpose of God,

solemnly adopted and declared, will in one instance be frustrated, and in every instance in which this event takes place. Thus far then God will be finally disappointed of one end of his government really proposed by him, and expressly announced to the universe. Who can believe this concerning the Creator?

3. *If Christians continue not in holiness unto the end, the intercession of Christ will be frustrated.*

In John xvii. Christ, after having prayed for his apostles, says, verse 20, 'Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee: that they also may be one in us.' In this petition Christ prays the Father, that *all* those, who should believe on him through the word of the apostles, that is, all Christians, may become partakers of that divine union which in the heavens is the most perfect created resemblance of the ineffable union of the Father and the Son. If then any Christian fails of sharing in this union, the prayer of Christ here recited will not be answered.

4. *If the holiness of Christians does not continue unto the end, the joy of heaven over their conversion is groundless, and in vain.*

Our Saviour informs us, that 'there is joy over one' (that is, over every) 'sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, who need no repentance.' No error exists in heaven. All the perceptions of its inhabitants are accordant with truth; all their emotions are founded in truth. The joy excited there by the continuance of ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance (that is, persons perfectly just), in their holiness, is a joy founded on the everlasting holiness of these persons, and the everlasting happiness by which it is inseparably attended. The joy excited by the repentance of a sinner is, however, greater than even this. As this is unconditionally asserted by Christ, it is unnecessary for me, in the present case, to inquire

into the reasons of the fact. But a joy excited by the repentance of a sinner, whose everlasting holiness, and consequent everlasting happiness, is uncertain ; nay, who may never be holy nor happy at all, beyond the first and feeblest efforts and enjoyments of a Christian in his infantine state, cannot be founded in truth, nor dictated by wisdom ; nay, it cannot be accordant with common sense. Upon the plan here adopted, the object on which this joy is founded, although a penitent to-day, may be a reprobate to-morrow ; may thus finally lose both his holiness and his happiness ; and, becoming a more guilty, may, of course, become a more miserable wretch than if he had never repented. In this case there would be, upon the whole, no foundation for joy at all ; and the inhabitants of heaven would, in many instances, instead of rejoicing rationally, and on solid grounds, be merely tantalized by the expectation of good which they were never to realize.

What, in this case, would be the conduct of rational men in the present world ? We have instances enough of their conduct, in cases substantially of a similar nature, to furnish us with an unerring answer to this question. They would, as in all cases of such uncertainty they actually do, indulge a timorous, trembling hope, that the case might end well ; that the penitent might persevere, and finally become safe. They would experience a degree of satisfaction that this first step had been taken, because it was indispensable to the rest ; and would feel a continual anxious suspense, lest others equally indispensable should not follow. What wise and good men in this world would feel, on such an occasion, wiser and better men in the world to come, must, of necessity, also feel, and feel much more intensely because they comprehend the subject in a manner so much clearer, juster, and more perfect. Of course, their suspense, their anxiety, must exist in a far higher degree. Such a suspense, such an anxiety, must, one would think, imbitter even the happiness of heaven.

Frustrated expectations of great good also are, in this world, sources of extreme sorrow. The same fact must, in that benevolent world, be a source of the same sorrow. But how often, according to this scheme, must such expectations be there frustrated! Can this be reconcilable with a state of unmingled happiness?

5. *That the holiness of Christians should not continue to the end, is inconsistent with many scriptural declarations.*

‘We know,’ saith St. John, ‘that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.’ 1 John iii. 14. It is impossible for any person to know that he has passed from death unto life, unless he has actually thus passed. But St. John declares, that himself, and such other Christians as love the brethren, have this knowledge; or, perhaps more conformably with the apostle’s real design, all Christians know *this*, who know that they *love the brethren*. The love of the brethren is certain, absolute proof, that all those in whom it exists have passed from death unto life. And this proof exists, whether perceived by him who is the subject of this love, or not perceived. But every Christian loves the brethren, and that from the moment in which he becomes a Christian. Every Christian, therefore, has actually passed from death unto life. This, however, cannot be true, unless every Christian perseveres in holiness unto the end. Every Christian does, therefore, persevere.

‘Being confident,’ says St. Paul, ‘of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.’ The word, here rendered ‘perform,’ signifies *to finish*, or *complete*. St. Paul was confident, therefore, that the Spirit of God, who had begun a good work, *viz.* the work of sanctification, in the Philippian Christians, would continue to complete it by various steps, until it was brought to perfection. But St. Paul, under the influence of inspiration, could not mistake concerning this subject. His confidence was founded

in truth. The work, begun in the Philippian Christians, *was completed*. Of course it will be completed in all other Christians.

‘ Verily, verily, I say unto you,’ says our Saviour, ‘ He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that hath sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation ; but is (hath) passed from death unto life.’ John v. 24. In this passage it is declared, that ‘ he that heareth the word of Christ, and believeth on him, by whom he was sent, has passed from death unto life.’ What is meant by this phrase is also decisively explained, when it is said, ‘ every such person hath everlasting life ;’ and when it is farther said, ‘ he shall not come into condemnation.’ But every Christian, when he *becomes a Christian*, hears the word of Christ, and believes on him that sent him : therefore, every Christian has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation ; but has already passed from death unto life.

Declarations of the same import abound in the Scriptures. It cannot be necessary to multiply quotations any farther. If these are not believed, none will be believed.

6. *The doctrine against which I contend is inconsistent with many scriptural promises.*

Such a promise is contained in the passage last recited. ‘ He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, shall not come into condemnation.’

Another is contained in the following words, John vi. 37, ‘ Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.’ Every Christian has come to Christ, in the very sense of this passage. Should he then be rejected afterward, he would be as really cast out as if rejected at first ; and the promise would not be performed.

Another example of the same nature is found in Mark xvi. 16, ‘ He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved.’ Every Christian has believed every Christian will therefore be saved.

Another is found in John x. 27, 28, 'My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.'

Another in the 9th verse of the same chapter: 'I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved.'

All these are promises uttered by Christ himself; and it will not be denied, that he understood the import of his own promise, nor that he will faithfully perform it to the uttermost.

Finally: St. Paul has declared his views concerning this subject, in a manner which one would expect to terminate the controversy. 'Moreover,' says this apostle, 'whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified.' This is both a declaration and a promise; and in both respects, is unconditional and universal. In the most express language it asserts, that every one who is effectually called is justified, and will, in the end, be glorified also. But every Christian is thus called.

I shall now proceed to consider the principal objections against the perseverance of Christians.

1. *It is objected, that this doctrine is inconsistent with free agents.*

This objection, as to its real import, I have had occasion to consider in several preceding Discourses. If the answers made to it then were just and sufficient, they must admit of a satisfactory application to this subject. The drift of the objection in every case is against the doctrine, that God can create a free agent who shall yet be a holy being. If he can create such an agent, and make him holy from the beginning; he can, undoubtedly, with equal ease and equal consistency, render such an agent holy after he is created. But it cannot be scripturally denied, that our first parents, or the angels, were created holy; nor that the man Jesus Christ was created holy. Nor

can it be denied that all these were, in the fullest sense, free agents. The very acknowledgment that they were holy, is an acknowledgment that they were free agents ; for holiness is an attribute of free agents only. It is certain then that God can render such agents holy at any time after they are created, without infringing at all the freedom of their agency. In other words, he can regenerate them ; can sanctify them afterward, at successive periods ; and can, of course, continually increase their holiness to the end of their lives.

Farther : Angels and glorified saints will persevere in holiness throughout eternity ; and their perseverance is rendered absolutely certain by the unchangeable promise of God. Yet neither this perseverance, nor the certainty of it, will at all diminish the freedom of their agency. The perseverance of saints in this world may therefore exist to the end of life, and may be absolutely certain, without any diminution of the freedom of their agency.

2. *It is alleged, that the Scriptures promise eternal life to Christians conditionally ; and that this is inconsistent with the supposition, that every Christian will certainly persevere in holiness.* For example : ‘ He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved : ’ and again : ‘ For we are made partakers with Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.’

There are many passages of this nature in the New Testament. As the import of them all is exactly the same, it will be unnecessary to quote any more. Their universal tenor, whether given in the form of promises, cautions, exhortations, or commands, is this ; that eternal life will not be allotted to any of mankind, except those who continue in obedience unto the end. Hence it is argued, that a discrimination is here intentionally made between such Christians as do, and such as do not, thus continue in their obedience. Otherwise, it is observed, the condition would be useless, and without any foundation in fact.

To this I answer: First, that a conditional promise, collateral to an absolute one, can never affect, much less make void, the absolute promise. The promises which I have recited, of eternal life to every Christian, are all absolute; as are also many others of the same nature. They cannot therefore be made void by these conditional ones.

Secondly, It is still true, that none but those who endure to the end will be saved; and equally true, that every Christian will endure to the end.

It is elsewhere said in the Scriptures, that if we 'do not believe, we shall be damned;' that 'if we do not repent, we shall perish;' that 'if we do not love the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be anathema;' that 'without holiness no man shall see the Lord;' that 'he who hateth his brother abideth in death;' and that 'without love we are nothing.' From these passages it might with the same force be concluded, that some persons believe, who do not repent; that some repent, who are not holy; and that some are holy, who yet hate their brethren; and that thus a discrimination was intended to be made between believing Christians and penitent ones; and between both these, and such as are holy. The truth is, every Christian does all these things. These several descriptions were given, partly to shew us the whole nature of Christianity; partly to teach us all our duty; partly to shew us, that all of it is indispensable; and partly to furnish us with useful and necessary evidence of our Christian character.

At the same time, all these conditional promises and exhortations are, and were intended to be, powerful means of the very perseverance which is the principal subject of them. We are not constrained or forced to persevere; nor should we, on the other hand, persevere, were we wholly left to ourselves. Our perseverance is owing to two great causes: the influence of the Spirit of God on our hearts; and the various means furnished in the word, ordinances, and providence of God, accompanied with the divine blessing upon the use of them. Among these means,

the very condition here suggested in so many impressive forms is of high importance, and has contributed to the perseverance of Christians in holiness ever since the Scriptures were published. Although, therefore, all Christians actually thus persevere; yet it is not improbable that, without the aid of those passages of Scripture here alluded to, multitudes might have fallen away. Christians have no other satisfactory knowledge of their Christianity, except their continuance in obedience. The earnest desire of possessing this knowledge, on the one hand, and the fear of being found destitute of the Christian character, on the other, cannot but serve as powerful motives (motives too powerful, in my view, to be safely omitted in the scriptural system) to produce in the Christian perseverance in holiness.

3. *It is objected, that this doctrine naturally contributes to lessen the diligence of the Christian in his duty.*

For an answer to this objection, I must refer you to the observations made in a former Discourse on the same objection to the doctrine of *justification by faith*. In that Discourse, the objection was applied to the doctrine now under consideration; and, if I mistake not, was satisfactorily obviated.

4. *It is objected, that several passages of Scripture teach the contrary doctrine.*

Among these is Heb. vi. 4—8, ‘For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them unto repentance: seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. For the earth, which drinketh in the rain that cometh upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God; but that which beareth thorns and briers, is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.’

It will be unnecessary for me to determine here, who are the persons meant by the apostle in this pas-

sage. He himself has decided, that they are not *Christians*. Their character is fully expressed in the 8th verse, under the image of 'the earth which beareth thorns and briers;' while that of Christians is expressed in the 7th verse, under the image of the earth, 'which bringeth forth herbs, meet for them by whom it is dressed.' These are here studiously contrasted. The character of the former is, therefore, exhibited by the apostle as a direct contrast to that of Christians; who, it is to be remembered, are represented every where in the Scriptures as bringing forth good fruit. This passage then teaches nothing opposed to the doctrine which I am endeavouring to support.

Secondly, It is not asserted by the apostle that those of whom he speaks ever *actually* fall away. The case is stated only in the form of a supposition, and he declares only that, should they fall away, there is no possibility of renewing them unto repentance. Whether such persons do in fact fall away, is therefore left uncertain.

Should it be thought, that the expressions in this passage amount to a description of Christianity; and that, therefore, Christians are meant in it; I answer, that neither of the expressions taken separately, nor all of them together, involve any necessary description of Christianity. It is true, that Christians sustain all these characteristics, except two; *viz. partaking of the Holy Ghost, and the powers of the world to come* (*μελλοντος αιωνος, the future age*); that is, the period of the Christian dispensation, thus denominated. These phrases indicate the miraculous powers possessed by many Christians when this passage was written, but never belonging to Christians as such. They, therefore, denote no part of Christianity. Judas possessed these characteristics. The remaining expressions are all indefinite; and as truly applicable to men who, still continuing to be sinners, have enjoyed peculiar Christian advantages, as they can be to Christians. The whole drift of this passage, therefore, even when construed most fa-

vourably for those whom I oppose, is only ambiguously in favour of their doctrine; and is, in my view, decided against them by the apostle himself. But it cannot be rationally believed, that a doctrine of this importance would, in opposition to so many clear decisive declarations, have been left to expressions merely ambiguous.

Another passage pleaded for the same purpose is the declaration of Christ, John xvii. 12, 'Those whom thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition.' To discover the true meaning of this passage, we need only recur to other declarations of the same glorious Person. 'Many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias; but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.' The widow of Sarepta is here, by the very same phraseology, included among 'the widows of Israel;' as Judas was included among those 'that were given to Christ.' Yet we know, and this passage declares, that she was not an Israelitish, but a Sidonian widow: and we know equally well, that Judas was never given to Christ as a Christian.

Again: 'There were many lepers in Israel, in the time of Elisæus the prophet; and none of them were cleansed, saving Naaman, the Syrian.' Naaman the Syrian was not an Israelitish leper; though, in the first apparent meaning of the passage, mentioned as such. Judas was not given to Christ, although apparently mentioned as thus given. The whole meaning of this phrase would be completely expressed thus: 'Those whom thou gavest me have I kept; and none of them is lost: but the son of perdition is lost.'

That Judas was never given to Christ we know from his whole history, and the repeated declarations of his Master. This passage, therefore, has not even a remote reference to the subject in debate.

Another passage of the same nature is 1 Tim. i. 19, 'Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away, concerning faith have made ship-

wreck.' The meaning of this passage may be easily learned from a correct translation: 'Holding fast faith (faithfulness or fidelity), and a good conscience; which some (that is, some teachers), having cast away, concerning the faith (*την πιστιν*, that is, the doctrines of the gospel), have made shipwreck.'

Generally, it may be observed, that the doctrine against which I contend is not supported in a single unequivocal declaration of the Scriptures. I know of none in which it is asserted in terms so favourable to it as those which I have considered. Whatever is said concerning the apostasy of any Christian professor, is decisively explained by St. John. 'They went out from us, but they were not of us: for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us.'

REMARKS.

1. *The faithfulness of God is highly conspicuous in the truths which have been now discussed.*

Christians provoke God daily, and awaken his anger against themselves more and more continually. By every sin they persuade him, if I may be allowed the expression, to desert them, and to give them up to themselves. Still he preserves them from destruction. He has promised them life. He has established his covenant with them for an *everlasting* covenant; and it shall *never be forgotten*. On his immutability their safety stands immoveable. In this manner it is exhibited by himself. 'For I (saith he) am Jehovah: I change not: therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.' This attribute is the seal, the certainty of every promise: and 'sooner shall heaven and earth pass away, than one jot or one tittle of that which is promised shall fail.'

2. *From these observations we learn, that the promises of the gospel are absolutely necessary for the hope and support of Christians.*

Christians in their very best estate possess such a character as, to say the most, furnishes a very feeble and distant hope of their perseverance in

holiness, and their final success in obtaining salvation. In better language, if left to themselves, there is no rational hope that they would ever arrive at the kingdom of heaven. If God did not preserve them, they would fall daily, certainly, and finally. Without the promises of God, prone as Christians are to backslide, they would feel no confidence in their own success; but would sink into despondency and despair. To preserve them from this despondency, and the ruin which would result from it, God has filled his word with promises, which yield solid and sufficient support, consolation, hope, and joy. On these they rest safely, and cannot be moved.

3. *We here learn, that the Christian life is a life far removed from gloom.*

Many persons, hearing often of the self-denial, repentance, and mortification of sin, connected with Christianity, have supposed a life of religion to be only gloomy and discouraging; and have thus dreaded it, as destitute of all present enjoyment. In this opinion they have been confirmed by the sad countenances, demure behaviour, and cheerless lives, of some who have professed themselves Christians. All this, however, is remote from the true character of religion. Real Christianity furnishes the fairest and most abundant enjoyment. It is delightful in itself; and, when not the immediate object of persecution, finds every where comforts, friends, and blessings. In God, the Christian finds a sure, an ever-present, an everlasting friend; in Christ, a Saviour from sin and sorrow; in the divine promises, an indefeasible inheritance of unceasing and eternal good.

Let none, therefore, particularly let not those who are young, and who are easily deterred from approaching that which wears a forbidding aspect, be hindered from becoming religious by any apprehended gloominess in religion, or any sorrowful deportment of those who profess to be Christians. Christianity is but another name for joy. It can spread a smile even over this melancholy world,

and lend delightful consolation to suffering and to sorrow. All its dictates, all its emotions, all its views, are cheerful, serene, and supporting. Here it is safe; hereafter it will triumph. Sin only is misery. Sinners in this world have a thousand sufferings of which the good man is ignorant; and in the world to come will lie down in eternal sorrow.

SERMON LXXXVIII.

REGENERATION.

ITS EVIDENCES. WHAT ARE NOT EVIDENCES.

Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith: prove your own selves; know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?—
 2 COR. xiii. 5.

HAVING in a long series of Discourses considered the doctrine of *regeneration*, its antecedents, attendants, and consequents; I shall now proceed to another interesting subject of theology; *viz. the evidences of regeneration.*

In the text, the apostle commands the Corinthian Christians to ‘examine and prove themselves;’ and states the purpose of this examination to be to determine ‘whether they were in the faith.’ He then inquires of them, ‘Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?’ In the original, except ye be *αδοκιμοι*, *unapproved*; unable to endure the trial of such an examination. From this passage of Scripture it is plain, that it was the duty of the Corinthians to examine themselves concerning their Christian character; and that this examination was to be pursued by them so thoroughly, as to prove, so far as might be, whether they were, or were not, in the faith; whether Christ did, or did not, dwell in them by his Holy Spirit.

That which was the duty of the Corinthians is the duty of all other Christians. That which is the duty of all Christians, it is the duty of every minister to aid them in performing. To unfold *the evidences of religion in the heart* is therefore, at times, the duty of every minister; and to learn them, that of every Christian.

In attempting to perform this duty at the present time, I shall endeavour to point out.

I. *Some of the imaginary evidences of religion.*

II. *Some of its real evidences.*

III. *Some of the difficulties which attend the application of the real evidences of religion to ourselves.*

I. *I shall endeavour to point out some of the imaginary evidences of religion.*

By *imaginary evidences*, I intend those which are sometimes supposed to be *proofs* of its existence, but have this character *through mistake only*; evidences which may be, and often are, found in the hearts and lives both of the saint and the sinner; things on which it is dangerous to rely, because they do not evince in any degree either a holy or an unholy character. It will not be expected that I should enter into a minute and detailed account of a subject which has occupied formal treatises, and filled volumes. Considerations of particular importance can alone find a place in such a system of Discourses. To them therefore, I shall confine myself; and even these, I must necessarily discuss in a summary manner. With these preliminary remarks, I observe,

1. *That nothing in the time, place, manner, or other circumstances, of a supposed conversion, furnishes ordinarily any solid evidence that it is, or is not, real.*

It is not uncommon for persons, and for Christians among others, to dwell, both in their thoughts and conversations, on these subjects; and to believe that they furnish them with comforting proofs of their piety. Some persons rest not a little on their consciousness of the time, at which they believe themselves to have turned to God. So confident are they with regard to this subject, that they boldly appeal

to it in their conversation with others, as evidence of their regeneration. 'So many years since,' one of them will say, 'my heart closed with Christ. Christ was discovered to my soul. The arm of mercy laid hold on me. I was stopped in the career of iniquity. I received totally new views of divine things.' Much other language, of a similar nature, is used by them; all of which rests, ultimately, on their knowledge of the time at which they suppose themselves to have become the subjects of the renewing grace of God.

There is reason to believe, derived however from other sources, that these apprehensions may sometimes be founded in truth; in other instances there is abundant proof that they are founded in falsehood. But that which may easily be either false or true, as in the present case it plainly may, can never safely be made the ground of reliance; especially in a concern of such moment.

Other persons appeal with the same confidence to the *manner* and *circumstances* of their supposed conversion, as evidences of its reality. Thus one recites, with much reliance, the strong convictions of sin under which he was distressed for a length of time; the deep sense which he had of deserving the anger and punishment of God; his disposition readily to acknowledge the justice of the divine law in condemning him, and of the divine government in punishing him; his full belief that he was among the worst of sinners; and the state of despair to which he was brought under the apprehension of his guilt. Of all these things it may be observed, that, although convictions of sin generally, of the nature here referred to, always precede regeneration; yet, in whatever form or degree they exist, they are not regeneration. They cannot, therefore, be proofs of regeneration. He who has them, in whatever manner he has them, will, if he proceed no farther, be still 'in the gall of bitterness.'

But the same person, perhaps, goes on farther; and declares, that while he was in this situation of

distress, when he was ready to give himself up for lost, God discovered himself to him as a reconciled God; and filled his mind with new, sudden, and unspeakable joy; that he had a strong and delightful sense of the divine mercy in Jesus Christ, of the wonderful compassion of Christ in consenting to die for sinners, in being willing to accept of sinners, and particularly in being willing to accept of so great a sinner as himself; that he found his heart going forth in love to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, to the word and ordinances of God, and to the church of Christ; and that this state of mind was new to him, being constituted of emotions which he never felt before. On these things, therefore, he reposes, as supporting evidence that he is a Christian.

All this is, in my own view, a just account of what really takes place in the conversion of multitudes; and, did it exist in no other case, would undoubtedly furnish the very evidence here relied on without any sufficient warrant. The defect in this scheme lies in the fact, that these very emotions are experienced by multitudes who are not Christians. That a person who has been the subject of extreme distress, under convictions of sin and the fear of perdition should, whenever he begins to hope that his sins are forgiven, and his soul secured from destruction, experience lively emotions of joy, is to be expected as a thing of course: and that whether his hopes are evangelical, or false. All men must rejoice in their deliverance from destruction, whether truly or erroneously believed by them; and all men who have had a distressing sense of their guilt and danger will, under a sense of such a deliverance, experience intense emotions of joy. All men, also, who really believe that God is become their friend, will love him. All will love the word of God who consider it as speaking peace and salvation to themselves. This joy and this love, it is evident, are merely natural; and are felt, of course, by every mistaken professor of religion. Love to God and to divine things is a delight

in the *nature* of these objects, independently of any personal benefit to which we feel entitled from them.

Another person places confidence in the greatness of the *effects* which his sense of sin, and his hope of forgiveness, produced both on his body and mind. He will inform you, with plain consolation to himself, that his distressing apprehensions of his guilt sunk him in the dust, and caused him to cry out involuntarily ; deprived him of his strength, and for a time, perhaps, of the clear exercise of his reason ; caused him to swoon ; and almost terminated his life. Much the same effects, he will also observe, were produced in him by his consequent discoveries of the divine mercy. These overwhelmed him with transport, as his convictions did with agony. The extraordinary nature, and especially the extraordinary degree, of these emotions, furnishes this man with the most consolatory proof that he is a child of God.

On this I shall only observe, that as these emotions may be, and often are, excited by natural as well as evangelical causes ; so, when thus excited, they may exist in any supposable degree. The agonies and the transports, the agitations of body and of mind, prove, indeed, the *intensity* of the feelings experienced ; but they do not, in the least degree, exhibit either their *nature* or their *cause* ; and cannot therefore be safely relied on as evidences of religion.

A third person will tell you, that while he was in a state of absolute carelessness, and going on headlong in sin, he was suddenly alarmed concerning his guilt and danger by a *passage of Scripture*, which came to his mind in a moment, without any thought or contrivance of his own ; and perhaps that, after he had long wearied himself to find an escape from the wrath of God, another text of Scripture, also without any contrivance of his own, came as suddenly to his mind, conveying to him bright views of the divine mercy and glorious promises of salvation. The reliance of this man is placed especially on the fact, that these texts came to his mind without any effort on his

part, either to remember or to search after them. He therefore concludes that they were communicated to him directly by the Spirit of God; and that they conveyed to him a direct personal promise of eternal life. This is mere delusion. Passages of Scripture, and those just such as are here referred to, come often suddenly, and without any labour of theirs, to the minds of multitudes who are not Christians; and God is no more immediately concerned in bringing them to the mind in this case, than when we read them in the Bible, or hear them from the desk. What God speaks in the Bible he always speaks, and speaks to *us*; but he addresses nothing to *us*, when we *remember*, any more than when we *read* or *hear* his words. If we rely on the true import of what he says, we rely with perfect safety: but if we place any importance on the *mode*, in which at any time that which is said comes to our minds, we deceive ourselves. The whole of our recollection in these cases is a merely natural process; and is the result of that association of ideas by which memory is chiefly governed, and which brings to our remembrance *in the very same manner*, thousands of other things, as well as these texts of Scripture; of which, however, as being of little importance to us, we take no notice.

Other persons depend much on *the regularity of the process* with which their distresses and consolations have existed; and in the *conformity* of them to such a scheme and history of these things as they have found in books, or received from the mouth of acknowledged and eminent Christians. In the sermon on the Antecedents of Regeneration, I observed that *this work is in its process almost endlessly various*. But, in whatever manner it exists, the manner itself is of no consequence. Should we have exactly the same succession of distresses and consolations experienced by ever so many of the most distinguished saints, and yet our affections, instead of being evangelical, be merely natural; the order of their existence could never prove, that we were Christians; for we should

still be sinners. The *nature* of these affections, and not the *order*, is the great concern of all our self-examination.

2. *Zeal in the cause of religion is no evidence that we are or are not Christians.*

Men, we all know, are capable of exercising zeal in any case, in proportion to the degree of interest which they feel in that case. We also know, that there is 'a zeal which is not according to knowledge.' All persons naturally ardent become zealous about every thing in which they are once engaged; and especially, when they are opposed. Christians are zealous in the cause of religion; Deists and Atheists in the cause of infidelity; Jews in that of Judaism; Heathens in that of idolatry. The Ephesians were zealous for the worship of the great goddess Diana; St. Paul and his companions for that of the true God; the Anabaptists at Munster, for the wild reveries taught by their leaders; and thus concerning innumerable others. Nothing is more evident than that zeal was not, in most of these cases, any proof of piety in those by whom it was exercised.

As zeal itself, so the *degree* in which it exists, is no proof of vital religion. There have been multitudes of persons, whose *zeal* has prompted them to *court persecution*. It is not uncommon for members of small and despised sects to believe that *the sufferance of persecution is a decisive characteristic of the true church of God*; and to solicit it, as decisive evidence that they themselves are members of this church. With these views, they sedulously construe all the kinds and degrees of opposition with which they meet, into persecution. In this manner they regard the sober argumentation with which their opinions are refuted; the most dispassionate exposures of their folly and their faults; the most just operations of law, directed either against their crimes, or to the preservation of the rights of others; nay, even that abstinence from communion with them in their worship, and that refusal to farther their designs, which they, on their own part, claim as indefeasible

rights of man. Such persons ought to remember, that all, or nearly all, classes of Christians, even those whom they most oppose, nay, that infidels, and atheists, have been persecuted, and that the modern Jews have been more persecuted than any other sect, party, or people, now in existence. The sufferance of persecution, therefore, is no proof that we belong to the true church. Still more ought they to remember, that St. Paul hath said, ‘ Though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing.’

3. *No exactness in performing the external duties of religion, furnishes any evidence that we are, or are not, Christians.*

Few persons have been more exact in this respect than the ancient Pharisees. Yet Christ has testified of them, that they were ‘ a generation of vipers.’ Under the Christian dispensation, great multitudes of the Roman Catholics, notoriously profligate in many parts of their conduct, have, in various periods of popery, been remarkably punctilious in the performance of these duties. That which was no evidence of Christianity in *them*, cannot be evidence of Christianity in *ourselves*.

Many persons are exact in this conduct from the influence of education, and example; many from habit; many from the desire of religious distinction; many because they think this conduct a proof of their piety, and are uneasy without such proof; many because they think themselves in this way only, in the safe path to salvation; and many from other selfish reasons. In all these things, considered by themselves, there is no religion. Of course, the conduct to which they give birth cannot be evidential of religion.

4. *No exactness in performing those which are frequently called moral duties furnishes any evidence of this nature.*

Multitudes of mankind place great confidence in their careful performance of these external duties, as being evidential of their evangelical character,

just as other multitudes do in those mentioned under the preceding head ; and with no better foundation.

Justice, truth, and kindness, in their various branches and operations, are so important and useful to mankind, that we all readily agree in giving them high distinction in the scale of moral characteristics. Those who practise them uniformly and extensively, are universally considered as benefactors to the world, and as invested with peculiar amiableness and worth. Those who violate them, on the other hand, are, from the mischiefs which they produce, regarded as enemies and nuisances to the human race. At the same time, a high degree of importance is given to these duties in the Scriptures. They are greatly insisted on in the gospel, inculcated in many forms of instruction, commended in the most forcible language, and encouraged by most interesting promises. The violation of them is condemned and threatened in the most pungent terms, and under the most glowing images.

It cannot be surprising that, influenced by these considerations, parents should make these duties a prime part of their instructions and precepts to their children. But when we remember, that the practice of them has in all ages, and in all civilized countries, been considered as equally and as indispensably necessary to a fair reputation, and to success in the common business of life, we shall readily suppose, that these must be among the first things imbibed by the early mind from parental superintendence, and must hold a peculiar importance in all the future thoughts of the man.

Thus taught, and thus imbibed, we should naturally expect to see them practised during the progress of life, as extensively as can consist with the imperfect character of human beings. When thus practised, and especially when eminently practised, we cannot wonder to find those whose lives they adorn regarded as persons of real virtue and excellence. What less can be expected? These are the very actions towards our fellow-creatures required

by God himself, and dictated by evangelical virtue ; a part of the very fruits by which the Christian character is to be known. Why is not he who exhibits them a Christian? Oftentimes, also, they appear with high advantage in the conduct of persons distinguished by natural sweetness of disposition, peculiar decency of character, amiableness of life, and dignity or gracefulness of manners ; and thus become delightful objects to the eye, and excite the warmest commendations of the tongue. It is not strange, therefore, that they should have gained a high and established reputation, and should be extensively regarded as unequivocal proofs of an excellent character.

What others so generally attribute to them we not unnaturally accord with, whenever our own case is concerned ; and finding that we are believed by others to be Christians, on account of our good works of this nature, readily believe ourselves to possess the character. We are esteemed, loved, and commended, by those around us ; and cannot easily believe that the worth which they attribute to us is all imaginary.

Still, such a performance of these duties furnishes no proof that we are Christians. For, in the first place, they may be, and often are, all performed from the very motives mentioned under the last head, as being frequently *the sources* of exactness in the external duties of religion. Secondly, they are often performed by men who violate extensively, or grossly neglect, the duties of piety and temperance, and who, therefore, are certainly not Christians. Thirdly, they appear to have been all performed with uncommon exactness by the young man who came to Christ, to inquire ‘ what good thing he should do to have eternal life.’ Yet ‘ he lacked one thing ;’ and that was ‘ the one thing needful.’

5. *No degrees of sorrow or comfort, of fear or hope, experienced by any person about his religious concerns, at seasons succeeding the time of his supposed conversion, furnish any evidence of this nature.*

Sorrow springs from many sources beside a sense of our sins ; and from such a sense it may be derived, and yet not be ‘ the sorrow which is after a godly sort.’ We may easily and greatly sorrow for our sins, because we consider them as exposing us to the anger of God, and to everlasting ruin. Our comforts also may flow from other sources beside those which are evangelical. Some persons derive great consolation, and even exquisite joy, from a belief (and that whether well or ill founded) of their acceptance with God ; some from the apprehension that they are eminent Christians ; some from the unexpected influx of religious thoughts, and passages of Scripture coming suddenly into their minds ; some from what they esteem peculiar tokens of divine goodness to them ; tokens which they regard as proofs of the peculiar love and favour of God ; some from what they term peculiar discoveries of the glory of God, and the excellency of the Redeemer, and of the joys of the blessed in heaven. All these they consider as immediately communicated by God to themselves, because they are his favourites among mankind. There are also other states of mind, in which consolations are experienced from other sources ; consolations which may exist in high degrees, but which are too numerous to be mentioned at the present time.

What is true of the sorrows and comforts excited by religious considerations, is substantially true of the kindred emotions of fear and hope. These can also arise both from true and false apprehensions ; and can be either merely natural or wholly evangelical, or of a mixed nature. As they actually exist in the minds of men, they are, to say the least, often undistinguished as to their real nature by those in whom they exist ; and are, I believe, many times in a great measure undistinguishable. Their existence is so transient, they are frequently mingled with so many other views and emotions, and the eye of the mind is often so engaged by the objects which give birth to them, that it becomes extremely difficult to

fasten upon their true character.

6 *No evidence of our sanctification is furnished by our own confidence.*

The truth of this declaration may be easily seen in the fact, that multitudes feel the utmost confidence that they are Christians, who afterward prove by their conduct their entire destitution of Christianity. All enthusiasts usually confide with undoubting assurance in the reality of their own religion; and generally pity, and often despise, men of a humbler and a better spirit, because they do not enjoy such peculiar discoveries, such delightful exercises of devotion, such bright hopes and heavenly anticipations of future glory, as themselves. The Pharisee boldly said, 'God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men, or even as this publican. Yet he was a worse man than the publican. A collection of the Pharisees said to Christ, 'Are we blind also?'

I propose hereafter to consider at some length what is commonly called *the faith of assurance*. It will be sufficient to observe at the present time, that I believe some men to be really and evangelically thus assured. If this be admitted, as it undoubtedly will be by the great body of Christians, it follows of course, that confidence in our good estate is no proof that we are not Christians. A man may confide with sufficient evidence; he may also confide without it. It is plain therefore, that his confidence, considered by itself, furnishes no proof that it is well or ill founded.

I cannot however do justice to my own views, nor, as I believe, to the subject, without observing here, that in ordinary cases I entertain a better opinion of the modest, doubting, fearful professor, than of the bold and assured one. The life of the former, as it seems to me, is, commonly at least, more watchful, more careful, more self-condemning, more scrupulous concerning the commission of sin and the omission of duty, more indicative of dependance of God, more inclined to 'esteem others

better than himself,' more declaratory of the spirit of 'little children.' The spirit of the latter, even when he is admitted to be a Christian, appears to me to be often fraught, in an unhappy degree, with self-exaltation, with censoriousness, as well as contempt of those who differ from him; with uncharitableness, with peremptoriness of opinion, and with an unwarrantable assurance of the rectitude of whatever he believes, says, or does. These certainly are not favourable specimens of any character. I would be far from ultimately condemning the profession of all those in whom these things are more or less visible; yet I assert without hesitation, that their light would shine more clearly before men, were it not obscured by these clouds.

It is not the *degree* of confidence, but the *source* whence it is derived, and the *objects* on which it rests, by which its nature and import are to be determined. It may exist in the highest degree, without any religion; and religion may exist in very high degrees, at least, without any confidence.

7. *The belief of others that we are Christians, furnishes no proof of our Christianity.*

All persons who make a profession of religion, and many who do not, whose lives at the same time are exemplary, scrupulous, and unblamable, are by most charitable persons believed to be Christians. Some of these, however, beyond any reasonable doubt, are not Christians. Some we know to have lived in this manner, and to have sustained this character, both in ancient and modern times, without a pretension to vital religion. Judas was believed by his fellow apostles, for a length of time, and not improbably without a single doubt, to be a true follower of Christ. Hymenæus and Philetus appear to have sustained the same character; and apparently with as little foundation. All these were believed to be Christians by apostles, inspired men, of singular understanding in subjects of this nature. Yet *these* men were deceived. No words are necessary to prove that we and all others are

liable to deception in similar cases. If the belief of Peter and Paul, that the objects of *their* charity, in the cases specified, were Christians, was no evidence of their Christianity; then the belief of others that *we* are Christians, is no evidence of *our* Christianity.

REMARKS.

From these observations we learn,

1. *That we ought to exercise the utmost care and caution in examining the evidences of our own religion.*

How many professors of Christianity have considered the things which I have specified, as decisive proofs that themselves were good men! Yet, if I mistake not, it has been clearly shewn that all of them united furnish no solid evidence of this fact. *We* are just as liable to be deceived as *others*; and, unless peculiarly guarded, by the very same means. Others have rested their hopes of salvation on these things, as proofs of their religious character, and have been deceived. If *we* rest on them, we shall be deceived also; for we may possess all these things, and yet not be Christians. In a case of this moment, nothing ought voluntarily to be left at hazard. We are bound by our own supreme interest, as well as our duty to God, to fulfil the command of the text; to ‘examine and to prove ourselves, whether we be in the faith;’ and in doing this, to make use of the best means in our power to fasten, with as much care as possible, on those things which the Scriptures have made tests of a religious character; and earnestly to pray to God that we may not be deceived, either by ourselves or by any others.

2. *From the same source we learn also the impropriety and folly of making these things the foundation of our judgment concerning the religious character of others.*

Whenever we determine, that others are or are not Christians, because they exhibit these as evidences of their Christianity, *we* are plainly liable to gross error concerning *this* subject. All these

things may be truly testified concerning himself by a *Christian*; and with equal truth by a person *destitute* of Christianity. They are, therefore, no proofs of his religion or irreligion.

Still, a great multitude of professing Christians, many of whom, I doubt not, are really Christians, and all, or nearly all, enthusiastic professors, make these very things, or the want of them, the foundations of their favourable or unfavourable opinions of the religious character of others. They resort to them as to an acknowledged and scriptural standard, which they do not expect to find disputed, and to question which would, not improbably, be regarded by them as a proof of irreligion.

What is still more unhappy, among various classes of Christians in this country, these very things, particularly those mentioned under the first, second, and fifth heads of this Discourse, are, if I am not misinformed, not unfrequently made the objects of a public examination of candidates for admission to Christian communion, and the foundations of a public judgment concerning their religious character. To be able to remember the time when convictions of sin began, with their attendant distresses, and the time when they were followed by hopes, consolations, and joys; to have had these occasioned by the sudden, uncontrived, and unexpected influx of certain passages of Scripture into the mind; especially, if, according to a pre-established and acknowledged scheme of regeneration among themselves, these things have taken place in a certain order of succession; still more, especially, if the sorrows and consolations have risen very high; and, most of all, if they are succeeded by distinguished zeal about things pertaining to religion; are boldly pronounced ample evidence of the candidate's piety. In this manner, there is reason to fear, multitudes are miserably led astray, both by being induced *beforehand* to labour that these things may be truly said of themselves; and by settling down in a state of security on this false foundation *afterward*.

Nor is the case less unhappy, when persons rest their hopes on their exactness in performing the external duties of religion and morality. Yet vast numbers of mankind repose themselves on these, as on a bed of down ; and feel satisfied that God will not finally condemn persons who have laboured so much in his service. All of them will, however, find in the end, that to such as have done all this, and nothing more, ‘one thing is lacking ;’ viz. an interest in Christ ; a thing without which they cannot be saved.

3. *We see the danger of being strongly confident in the piety of ourselves or others.*

All or nearly all such confidence, so far as I have observed, has been derived from these supposed evidences of religion ; any part, or the whole, of which may be possessed by men totally destitute of Christianity. It is a fatal mark on them all, that the Scriptures have no where alleged them as proofs of religion. As they are not scriptural proofs, they cannot be sound. To trust in them is to trust in a nullity. Accordingly, those who give the fairest proofs of Christianity in their life and conversation, never make these things the foundation of their hope, and are very rarely found to be strongly confident of their acceptance with God.

To pronounce boldly that others are Christians, is, in many cases at least, equally hazardous. There are many persons, however, who roundly declare others, of whose life they have had little or no knowledge, to be Christians ; and others not to be Christians, whose conduct and conversation give them at least as fair, and often fairer, claims to this character. Nay, they will peremptorily make these assertions concerning ministers of the gospel ; and pronounce some to be sanctified, and others unsanctified, from a sermon or a prayer, or even from the tones of voice with which they are uttered. ‘Judge not, saith our Saviour, ‘that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged ; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to

you again.' 'Who art thou,' saith St. Paul, 'that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth.' It is sufficient, to shew the impropriety and rashness of these unwarrantable decisions, that they are founded on no scriptural or solid evidence. They are generally built on the very things exploded in this Discourse, or others of still less importance; all of which united, go not a single step towards proving a religious or an irreligious character.

SERMON LXXXIX.

REGENERATION.

ITS EVIDENCES. WHAT ARE REAL EVIDENCES.

Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith: prove your own selves; know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?—2 COR. xiii. 5.

IN the last Discourse, I attempted to point out several things which furnish no real evidence of regeneration, although they have been supposed to furnish it by multitudes in the Christian world. I now propose to mention several other things which *actually* furnish such evidence.

By all who believe the doctrine of regeneration, as formerly taught in these Discourses, it must be admitted, that the disposition communicated when this work is accomplished in us, is *new*; and something which before did not exist in the soul. If it were the mere increase, or some other modification, of the former disposition, man could not be said to be born again; to be *created anew*; to be a *new creature*; to be *renewed in the spirit of his mind*. It could not be said by St. Paul, concerning persons who were the subjects of regeneration, that 'old things

were passed away' in them, and that 'all things had become new.'

It must farther be acknowledged, that this new disposition is in its nature opposite to that which before existed in the mind. The former disposition is *sin*, condemned and punished by the law of God; the new disposition is *holiness*, required and rewarded by the same law. The former disposition is hateful in the sight of God; the new one lovely, and 'of great price.'

The former disposition is frequently and justly styled *selfishness*; as being perpetually employed in subordinating the interests of any and all others to the private personal interests of the individual in whom it prevails. The new disposition is, with the same propriety, styled *disinterestedness*, *love*; *goodwill*, *benevolence*: a spirit inclining him in whom it exists to subordinate his own private interest to the general welfare, and to find his own happiness in the common prosperity of the divine kingdom. The part, the place, and the enjoyments which God assigns to him as a member of this kingdom, he is inclined to take, not with submission only, but with cheerfulness; as being that, which is ordered by infinite wisdom, and is, therefore, the best, and most desirable.

This new disposition is also opposed to the former, particularly as it regards our Maker. The former, or 'carnal mind is enmity against God,' opposed to his character and to his pleasure; the new one is conformed to his pleasure, and delighted with his character. He in whom it exists 'delights in the law of God after the inner man;' and esteems it as 'more to be chosen than the most fine gold, and sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.'

The former disposition is an impenitent devotion to sin; attended, at times, and after some of its grosser perpetrations, by remorse perhaps, and self-condemnation; but never by a real loathing of the sin itself, nor by that ingenuous sorrow for it, 'which is after a godly sort.' The new disposition is a real

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hatred of sin ; a sincere, and, if I may so call it, an instinctive sorrow for every transgression of the divine commands, whenever such transgression is present to the view of the mind.

The former disposition was a general spirit of unbelief or distrust towards God, his invitations, promises, and designs ; a distrust especially exercised towards the Redeemer, and towards his righteousness as the foundation of our acceptance with God. The new one is a humble, steadfast, affectionate confidence in God, his declarations and designs ; exercised particularly towards Christ, as the Saviour of mankind, the propitiation for sin, and the true and living way to eternal glory. This confidence, or, as it is most usually termed in the New Testament, this *faith*, is a vital principle in the soul, producing every act of real obedience, every act in man which is pleasing to God.

In all these particulars united, the new disposition is termed *godliness*, or *piety*.

The former disposition is inclined to the indulgence of those lusts, or passions and appetites, which immediately respect ourselves ; such as pride, vanity, sloth, lewdness, and intemperance. The new one is opposed to all these ; is humble, modest, diligent, chaste, and temperate. In this view, it is styled, *temperance*, *moderation*, or *self-government*.

As in all these things the spirit communicated in our regeneration not only differs so greatly from that which we possess by nature, but is so directly opposed to it ; it must be admitted, that, in all its operations it carries with it some evidence of its existence, in the same manner as our sinful disposition carries with it evidence of its existence. He who denies that holiness in a renewed mind can be evidenced by its nature and operations, must also deny, either that any moral character whatever can be perceived to exist, or that a holy disposition is capable of the same proof as a sinful one. That this is philosophy too unsound to be adopted by a sober man, is so evident as to need no illustration. Indeed, it may be doubted

whether any man will openly aver this doctrine; although multitudes assert that which involves it. Certainly, a sinner who examines his own heart and life must discern that he is sinful; with equal certainty an angel must discern that he himself is holy.

From what has been said of the nature of the renewed disposition it is clear, that the man, who repents of his sins, who believes in Christ, who loves and fears God, who disinterestedly loves his neighbour, and forgives his enemies, and who employs himself daily in resisting and subduing his own passions and appetites, must have *some consciousness* that he does these things. In this *consciousness*, as it continually rises up to the view of the mind, consists the *primary* or *original evidence* that *we are Christians*. Indeed, all the evidence of this nature which we ever possess, is no other than this consciousness, variously modified, and rendered more explicit and satisfactory by the aid of several things with which, from time to time, it becomes connected.

Having made these general observations, I shall proceed to state the following particulars, in which, I apprehend, this evidence will be especially seen.

1. *The renewed mind relishes all spiritual objects.*

Every man knows what it is to relish *natural* objects; such as agreeable food, ease, warmth, rest, friends, beauty, novelty, and grandeur. Every man knows that these objects are relished also *in themselves*, for their *own sake*, as being in themselves pleasant to the mind, independently of *consequences*, and of all other extraneous considerations. In the same manner, according to what is here intended, are *spiritual* objects relished by the *renewed* mind. A Christian regards the character of God, the character of Christ, the divine law, the gospel, and his own duty, as objects pleasing in their own nature. Thus David, of the religious exercises of whose mind we have a more detailed account than we have of those of any other scriptural writer, says concerning the 'statutes of the Lord,' that 'they are right; rejoicing the

heart: more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter than honey, and the honeycomb.' And again, 'How sweet are thy words unto my taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth. I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold.' And again, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon the earth, whom I desire beside thee.'—'Oh taste, and see, that the Lord is good!' 'Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous; and shout for joy all ye upright in heart!' With these expressions of David correspond all the declarations of the other divine writers, wherever they are made. Thus St. Paul says, 'I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ.' Thus also the same apostle says, 'I delight in the law of the Lord after the inward man.'

This doctrine has been extensively illustrated in the Sermon lately delivered on the subject of *joy in the Holy Ghost*; and therefore will need the less illustration here.

It ought, however, to be remembered, that a delight in these things, because of some benefit which we have, or imagine ourselves to have, derived from them, or which we hope to derive from them immediately, or from the relish of them, whether it be the favour of God, comforting evidence of our Christianity, or any other benefit whatever, is not the kind of relish of which I speak. This is directed towards the things themselves, as being in themselves delightful to the taste of the mind. If the character of God is excellent, it cannot but be supposed that this excellence must be relished by a person suitably disposed; and that, although this person were to be ignorant of any manner in which he himself was to derive personal benefit from it.

Wherever this relish exists it will ordinarily shew itself, not only in the manner in which the mind immediately regards spiritual objects, but in its remoter operations. Thus, if a man really relishes the worship of God, he will be apt to be regularly employed in it at all proper seasons. He will find himself in-

clined to ejaculatory prayer, to pray in his closet, in the family, and in the church. If he loves the Scriptures, he will be apt to read them regularly, much, and often. If he relishes the company of religious persons, he will naturally frequent it, seek it, and derive from it, when enjoyed, a sensible pleasure.

To *secret prayer* there seems to be hardly any allurements, sufficient to keep the regular practice of it alive for a great length of time, beside a relish for communion with God. It is plain, that secret prayer cannot be continued with a view to be seen of men, or the hope of acquiring reputation. As in its own nature it cannot but be disrelished by every sinner, it seems as if it must, of course, be soon dropped where piety does not keep it alive. Thus Job seems to have reasoned, when he said concerning the *hypocrite*, 'Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God?' Job xxvii. 10. As if he had said, 'He will not delight himself in the Almighty; and therefore will not always, or throughout life, continue to pray to God: but will cease from this practice, after the casual feelings and views which gave birth to it have ceased to operate.' A continued relish for secret prayer furnishes, therefore, a strong and hopeful testimony that we are Christians.

St. John informs us, that the *love of Christians* also, is a satisfactory proof that *we* are Christians. 'Hereby we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.' As this subject was extensively considered in the Discourse on *brotherly love*, it will be unnecessary to dwell upon it here. It will however be proper to observe, that we are not in the present case supposed to love Christians, because they are our personal friends, or because they have been, or are expected to be, useful to us; but because they are Christians; and on account of the excellence and amiableness of the Christian spirit which they possess and manifest. For this reason God loves them; that is, with the love usually termed *complacency*; and for this reason only, since he can plainly receive no benefit from them.

For the same reason they are loved by their fellow Christians.

In order to know whether we love them, it will be proper to ask ourselves the questions, mentioned in the Discourse alluded to. Do we love their goodness of character? Do we seek their company? Do we relish their conversation? Do we take pleasure in their Christian conduct? Do we pray for their prosperity, their holiness, and their salvation?

I will only add under this head, that with respect to all spiritual objects, we are carefully to inquire whether we relish them at all; and whether we relish them for themselves: for the excellence, which they possess; or for some apprehended benefit which may be derived from them to ourselves.

2. *Real religion is always accordant with the dictates of reason enlightened by revelation.*

By this I intend, that it is not, on the one hand, the mere result of passion, affection, or impulse, as in every case of enthusiasm; and that it is not, on the other, the result of mere philosophy, or the decisions of human reason, unenlightened by revelation; as is the case with the professed natural religion of Deists. The good conscience of a good man is, on the one hand, purged from these dead works; and, on the other, exercises such a control over all the affections, as to direct their various operations steadily towards that which the Scriptures have pronounced to be true and right.

Religion, in the scriptural sense, is a *reasonable*, not a *casual*, nor an *instinctive*, *service*. Man acts in it, not as an animal under the mere impulse of animal affections; not as a subject of mere passion, not as a creature of mere imagination, not as a mere subject of all these united; but as a rational being in whom the understanding governs, and in whom the affections only aid, animate, and obey. There are Christians in profession whose religion seems to be nothing but a compound of mere impulses and affections. There are others whose religion appears to be little else beside a cold, heartless, collection of

propositions or doctrines, quietly lying side by side in the understanding, without any influence on the heart or on the life. In the religion of the gospel, the *heart* is plainly made the great essential; but it is *the heart under the steady direction and rational control of the understanding*. Real Christianity is the energy or active power of the soul, steadily directed to that which is believed to be right, and thus directed to it, merely because it is right. That which it aimed at is loved and pursued, because of its rectitude, admitted on satisfactory and solid evidence.

From this source the renewed man is furnished with important evidence of his sanctification. If he finds in himself a steady disposition to learn as far as possible the true import of the doctrines and precepts of the gospel, and in this manner the real nature of his own duty; if he loves moral rectitude in such a degree as anxiously to inquire what it is, and if, when he has learned what it is, he is disposed to yield to proof and conviction, and pursue his duty, because it is seen to be his duty, he may justly be satisfied, that he is really renewed.

But if, on the contrary, he is accustomed to obey the casual impulses of feeling and imagination; if he is disposed to think highly of passages of Scripture, not because they are the word of God, or are excellent in themselves, declaring important truths, or enjoining important duties, but because they have come into the mind suddenly, accidentally, and without any forethought of his own; if he is inclined to prize such texts more than others, or more than he prized the same texts before; if he is disposed to think highly of sudden starts of feeling, of thoughts and purposes unexpectedly coming into the mind, and to regard them as produced by an extraordinary divine agency, and therefore to value them highly, as peculiar tokens of the favour of God, and as authoritative and safe guides to his own duty; if he is fond of indulging a lively imagination about the things of religion; of forming to himself awful views concerning the world of misery, and the suf-

ferings of its inhabitants; or bright and beautiful visions of the light and splendour of heaven, and the glory of its inhabitants; or charming images of the person of Christ, as beautiful in form, ravishing in aspect, and surrounded with radiance; or as meek, gentle, looking with compassion, or smiling with complacency, on himself; if he is inclined to rest on these feelings and impulses, as the peculiar foundations of his hope, consolation, and confidence, or as any foundations of hope and confidence at all; I will not say, that such a man is not renewed; but I will say, that he trusts without evidence, and builds upon sand. I will farther say, that he is miserably deluded with regard to this great subject; that he feeds on wind, and not on food; and that by directing his eye to false objects, from which he never can derive any real good, he loses the golden privilege of gaining solid support and evangelical comfort from those sources whence alone God has intended they should be derived.

3. *The prevalence of a meek and humble disposition furnishes the mind with good reason to believe that it is renewed.*

The natural spirit of man is universally proud and irritable. No part of the human character is so predominant, more pleasant to ourselves, more deceitful, or more universal. At the same time, as we might expect, none is so much cherished by the mind. A great part of the perfection aimed at, and delineated by, the wise men of heathen antiquity, was formed of pride. Stoical pride is proverbial. The love of glory, according to Cicero, was virtue, or real excellence of character.

Devoted as we are to the indulgence of pride, it is perhaps of all passions the most unworthy and mischievous, the most irritable, the most unforgiving, the most wrathful, the most contentious, and the most oppressive. The world has been filled by it with private quarrels and public wars, with wretchedness at the fireside, with turmoil in the neighbourhood, and with bloodshed and desolation in the

great scenes of national activity. It has brought forth the tyrant, and nursed the conqueror.

The religion of the gospel has laid the axe at the root of this passion. Christ, the glorious Author of this religion, has exhibited in his own life a character perfectly contrasted to pride, in every degree, and in every exercise. This character he has beautifully expressed in that memorable and delightful declaration, subjoined to the most consoling invitation and the happiest tidings ever published to the children of men. 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.' In conformity with this declaration, his whole life was a life of meekness and humility. In conformity with this declaration also, he has every where in the gospel preferred, as was remarked in one of the Discourses on his character, the meek and lowly virtues to the magnanimous and splendid ones. He has inculcated them oftener; has dwelt on them more; has enjoined them in stronger terms, and has made them in a higher degree indispensable.

As these virtues, then, are such a prominent and essential part of Christianity, it will be easily seen that they must be found in every Christian. So long as pride is the predominating spirit of man, he must know, if acquainted at all with himself, that he is not sanctified. A great part of the influence of the Spirit of sanctification is employed in annihilating this haughty, self-dependant disposition. One of the first perceptible effects of this influence is the humility of the gospel. A humble mind is, of course, meek, little disposed to feel provocations deeply, uninclined to construe them in the worst manner, and still more indisposed to requite them with wrath and revenge. What is thus the natural result of the Christian spirit is continually strengthened by the general disposition of the Christian to obey the precepts, and to follow the example, of his Master; both conspiring to enforce on him the same conduct

in the most powerful manner. He knows, that Christ has required the *same mind which was in himself* (and peculiarly in this respect), to be in all his followers. He sees the beauty and glory of the disposition in his great example. He knows that nothing without it will render him acceptable to God, or qualify him for admission into his kingdom. With these mighty motives in view, it seems impossible that this disposition, once begun in the soul, should fail to manifest itself in some good degree, by its genuine and happy effects.

The evidence which it furnishes to the mind of its renovation is twofold. Its former dispositions are weakened; and new ones have begun to prevail in their place. Pride is enfeebled in all its operations, the propensity to wrath is lessened, and humility and meekness (not insensibility to injuries, but a serene quiet of soul under them) have, like beautiful twin sisters, entered the mind, and made it their permanent habitation.

He who finds this his own state, possesses desirable evidence that he is a Christian.

4. *Without a prevailing spirit of gentleness towards others, we cannot have sound and scriptural evidence of our Christianity.*

This is a kindred subject to the last. The natural character of man is rough, revengeful, and unforgiving; disposed to overbear, to carry his measures by force and violence, to listen little to the wishes and reasons of others, and to arrogate to himself and his concerns an importance which all impartial persons see does not belong to them.

To this spirit also the gospel is directly and equally opposed. It enjoins every where a spirit of gentleness, moderation, and forgiveness towards all men. Its Author was wonderfully distinguished by softness and sweetness of disposition. He never intruded on the rights of others. He used no force, nor even wrought a single miracle to vindicate his own. He neither 'cried, nor lifted up, nor caused his voice to be heard in the streets.' In the garden

he healed the ear of Malchus, and on the cross he prayed for his murderers. At the same time he required all his followers to possess and exhibit the same gentle and forgiving disposition, on pain of not being otherwise themselves forgiven. Nay, he has forbidden them to ask forgiveness of God upon any other condition. 'The servant of the Lord,' saith St. Paul, 'must not strive, but be gentle towards all men.'

The existence and influence of this part of the Christian character are especially seen in cases where we have been injured, and towards those who have injured us. If, beside quietly receiving injuries, we exercise a benevolent spirit towards those who have done them; if we can lay aside all thoughts of retaliation, if we can shew them kindness, if we can rejoice in their prosperity, if we can feel and relieve their distress, if we can heartily pray for their well-being, we have good reason to conclude that 'the same mind which was in Christ is also in us.'

5. *A willingness to perform, accompanied by the actual performance, of the duties required by the gospel, is an indispensable evidence of Christianity.*

There are multitudes of persons in the Christian world, who appear to place religion *greatly*, if not *wholly*, in such feelings of the mind as are rarely or never followed by any of those overt acts of obedience, which are commonly called Christian duties. Their *love*, contrary to the injunction given by St. John, appears to exist 'only in word, and in tongue; not in deed;' and therefore, we have reason to fear, not 'in truth.' We find persons of this character willing to converse much on religious subjects, to dwell on the nature of religious affections, to canvass abundantly the doctrines of the gospel, to explain minutely the nature of its precepts, to expose such tenets of others as they esteem erroneous, to defend strenuously such as they think true, and often to mix with all these things not a little censure of those who differ from them in opinion and character. I will not say that these persons are destitute of religion; but I will say, that, so far, they furnish little reason

why others should believe them religious.

Real religion is ever active, and always inclined to *do* as well as to *say*. The end for which man was made, and for which he was redeemed, was, that he might do good, and actively glorify his Creator. To this end all the instructions and precepts of the gospel were given, all the blessings of providence, and all the influences of the Spirit of God. All these therefore, are frustrated, and are without efficacy, where men do not thus act. The business of a Christian is not to say to others, 'Be ye warmed, and be ye filled; depart in peace;' but to feed and clothe them. This, I acknowledge, may be done by such as are not Christians; but he who does it not, cannot, so far as I see, be a Christian. Active obedience is the only visible fruit by which our religious character is discovered to others; and the fruit by which, in a manner peculiarly happy, it is known to ourselves.

To render this evidence of our sanctification satisfactory, it should, in the first place, be *uniform*.

By this, I intend, that *our active obedience should proceed in a manner generally regular through life*. I intend, that it should not exist by fits and starts; be cold to-day and warm to-morrow; now zealous, now indifferent; at one time animated by a strong sense of heavenly things; at another, absorbed in those of earth; at one time charitable, perhaps even to excess, at another, 'withholding more than is meet;' and all this, according to the rise and prevalence of different natural feelings. The spirit of Christianity is *one* in its nature, and therefore uniform in its operations. These indeed are diversified, as the objects which they respect vary. Thus the same disposition sorrows for sin, which rejoices in the Holy Ghost; and is at peace with itself, while it contends with its spiritual enemies. Still, a single character runs through them all; differing indeed in degree, but not in kind. Under its influence, the life will wear one general aspect. By ourselves, therefore, if we examine, and by others, who are at

tentive to our conduct, it will be seen to be of the same nature, and to produce the same effects, throughout the progress of life. I do not mean, that we shall not backslide ; or that we shall not have lukewarm, uncomfortable, unprofitable, and unexemplary seasons. These, unhappily, recur but too often. A field of wheat may grow with different vigour ; may at times be checked by cold, and stinted by drought, and may, at other times, and under the influence of refreshing showers and kindly seasons, flourish with strength, verdure, and beauty. Still it will always be a field of wheat, and not of tares and darnel.

Secondly : This obedience must, for the same end, be *universal*.

By this I intend, that *it must extend alike to all those duties which immediately respect God, our fellow-creatures, and ourselves.* Real virtue, or the religion of the gospel, never exists by halves. There is no such thing as being pious, and not benevolent ; or being benevolent, and not pious ; or being both, and not self-governed. Religion, in this sense, is *a spirit of obedience to God ; and regards all his commands alike.*

If then we would derive from our obedience that satisfactory evidence of our Christianity which it is capable of furnishing, we should examine ourselves concerning our whole conduct, and inquire how far it wears this universal character. We should inquire diligently, whether we regularly and steadily employ ourselves at all proper seasons in the worship of God, in reading the Scriptures, in communion with Christians, in communion with our own hearts, in watching, striving, and praying, against our lusts within, and our enemies without, in overcoming ‘ the world, the flesh, and the devil,’ in resisting especially ‘ the sins which most easily beset us ;’ in raising our thoughts and affections to heavenly objects, and in endeavouring effectually to make in the present life, preparation for eternity. Universally, we should inquire whether we live alway in the fear, love, and service of God, with a spirit of dependance, confidence, submission, contentment, and gratitude.

Among the duties to which we are summoned by the gospel, those which we owe immediately to our fellow-creatures and to ourselves are there exhibited as being of very high and indispensable importance. They are every where insisted on in the plainest, strongest, and most affecting manner: are commended, urged, enjoined, and promised a reward, from the beginning to the end of the Bible. At the same time, the neglect and the violation of them are condemned in the severest terms, and threatened under the most glowing images, with the severest punishment. ‘Who,’ says the psalmist, ‘shall abide in thy tabernacle; who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart; that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour; in whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them, that fear the Lord: he, that sweareth to his own hurt, and chargeth not: he that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh a reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved.’—‘If ye forgive men their trespasses,’ said our Saviour to his disciples, ‘your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but, if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses.’ The servant who owed ten thousand talents to his Lord, had his debt readily forgiven. But, when he oppressed his fellow-servant, the Lord delivered him over to the tormentors, till he should pay the debt. ‘If any man will not work, neither let him eat.’—‘If any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.’—‘Be not deceived,’ says St. Paul, ‘neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.’—‘Blessed,’ says David, ‘is he, that considereth the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble.’

And, what may serve instead of a volume upon this subject, Christ, seated on the throne of final judgment, will, as he declares, 'say to them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye ministered unto me; and inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye did it unto me.' To them on the left hand he will also say, 'Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not; and, inasmuch as ye did it not to the least of these, my brethren, ye did it not to me.'

From these passages of Scripture it will be seen, irresistibly, that the duties of these two classes are in the eye of God of incalculable importance, and are indispensable to the *Christian* character, and to the attainment of salvation.

Let it not be supposed for a moment, however, that I intend to prefer these duties to those which immediately respect God. Piety certainly holds the first place in a virtuous character; but no man loves God, who does not love his fellow-men, and control his own passions and appetites. 'As the body without the spirit is dead; so faith without good works is dead also.' 'He that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.'

There is one point of view in which these duties more effectually evince the Christian character, and prove the reality of our religion, than most of those which are classed under the name of *piety*. It is this: they ordinarily demand a greater degree of *self-denial*. A man may ordinarily practise the visible duties of piety, without any serious sacrifice of

his worldly inclinations. He may read the Scriptures, and teach them to his children; he may attend the worship of God in his family and in the sanctuary; he may be present in private religious assemblies; he may converse much and often on religious subjects; he may be very zealous about all these duties; he may commune at the table of Christ; he may preach the gospel: yet, instead of crossing his inclinations or denying himself, he may feel that he is purchasing a Christian character at a cheap rate; that he is securing to himself the best friends; that he is opening an easy way to distinction, to influence, and, in the end, to wealth; and that he is, upon the whole, making in this manner a very gainful bargain. Nay, he may in this manner more easily than in any other, quiet his own conscience, persuade himself that he is a Christian, feel satisfied that he has a title to eternal life: and thus, while he thinks he is performing his duty, be only seeking for the pleasure found in these things; pleasure which, though derived from sacred objects, is merely natural, and differs in nothing important from that which is furnished by pleasant food, fine weather, or a beautiful landscape.

But when a man is called to resist his passions and appetites; when he is required to be humble, meek, patient, forgiving, just, sincere, merciful, sober, chaste, and temperate; when he is required to communicate his property liberally to the poor, the stranger, and the public; and practically to 'remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give, than to receive;' he is required of course to sacrifice 'the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life.' He is required to give up his pride, vanity, ambition, anger, avarice, and sensuality: these darling inclinations, which constitute what is called in the Scriptures 'the love of the world,' together with all the objects on which they are pampered, he is obliged to yield up to the love of God.

Nothing more strongly evinces the sincerity of any

professions, than the fact, that they are followed by serious self-denial. Accordingly, the Scriptures have placed peculiar stress upon self-denial, as evidential of the genuineness of a Christian profession. 'If any man will be my disciple,' said our Saviour, 'let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.'—'If any man will save his life, he shall lose it; and, if any man will lose his life for my sake, he shall find it.'—'Go, and sell all that thou hast,' said he to the young ruler, 'and give to the poor, and come, and follow me; and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.'—'Love not the world,' says St. John, 'neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.'

When, therefore, we find the love of the world actually prevailing, and clearly manifested, in the life and conversation of persons who make a profession of religion, the evidence of their piety, of whatever nature it may be, must be exceedingly diminished in the eye of sober charity. Whatever zeal they may discover in attending upon public or private worship; however well they may converse upon religious subjects; whatever feelings they may discover in such conversation; and whatever bright discoveries they may seem to enjoy concerning the mercy or glory of God, or the love and excellence of Christ; if still they are greedy of gain, absorbed in the world, peevish, discontented, wrathful, slothful, sensual, unfeeling, vain of their attainments, uncharitable; particularly, if they are eagerly engaged in the pursuit of place, power, popularity, and fame; and more particularly still, if they refuse to give to the poor, or give leanly and grudgingly, or deny aid to others in their distresses; there will be little reason left to believe them children of God. How can these persons expect Christ to say at the final judgment, 'I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; sick, and ye visited me?' How can he say, 'Ye did it unto the least of these, my brethren?'

Were he on earth, and should tell them, as he told the young ruler, 'Go, and sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor;' would they not 'go away sorrowful?' Would they not feel that even 'to have treasure in heaven' upon these conditions, would be a hard bargain?

There have been, there are still, multitudes of mankind, and it is to be feared, that in this land and at the present time, the number is not small, of those who intend to go to heaven with a cheap religion; a religion, in which 'the love of the world' is made to harmonize with 'the love of the Father. This religion consists of feelings, views, discoveries, conversation about these and other religious subjects, and zeal in attending upon external religious duties. But 'whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him; how dwelleth the love of God in him?'

It is easy for any man who thinks that he is loved by God, to love him in turn. But this is not that love of God which he requires. The feelings and views which do not prompt us to virtuous conduct are of no value. If we would prove ourselves to be Christians, we should then diligently ask ourselves, whether we aim at being strictly just, sincere, and faithful; whether we actually shew kindness to all men, whether friends or enemies, strangers or neighbours; whether we 'do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again;' whether we befriend and promote public, useful, and charitable designs; employing both our substance and efforts as either may be needed; whether we love the souls of others, oppose their sins, and promote in them reformation and piety; and whether we are watchfully sober, chaste, temperate, diligent in our callings, and active in our opposition to every worldly lust.

Finally: Concerning all these things, we should carefully ask whether we take delight in such a life as this; and that, notwithstanding all the opposition, ridicule, and contempt of the world.

Among the different acts or kinds of obedience, also, particular attention is due to those which involve *peculiar self-denial*. When the avaricious man becomes generous and charitable, the ambitious man contented with his circumstances, the proud man humbled, the wrathful man meek, the revengeful man forgiving, and the sensualist sober, chaste, and temperate; in a word, when we drop our reigning sins, and assume the contrary virtues, of set and cordial purpose; we are furnished with strong reason to believe that we are Christians.

6. *The increase of all these things in the mind and life is, perhaps, the clearest of all the evidences of personal religion.*

St. Paul informs us that 'he did not count himself to have apprehended;' that is, he did not consider himself as having attained that great degree of excellence which belonged to his Christian profession. 'But,' saith he, 'this one thing I do:' or, perhaps, as the omission in the text is supplied by Doddridge, 'this one thing I can say: forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth to those which are before' (in the Greek, reaching out eagerly), 'I press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.' What was the conduct of Paul is the *duty* of all Christians; and is accordingly enjoined by him in the following verse. In greater or less degree it is their *conduct* also. They are directed 'so to run, that they may obtain;' and to 'grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ;' 'to increase, and abound, in love one towards another, and towards all men.'

As it is the duty of Christians to fulfil these precepts, so it is the nature of Christianity to accord with them, by increasing from time to time their strength and vigour. The more the spirit of the gospel is exercised, the more we love to exercise it. The more the pleasure found in it is enjoyed, the more it is coveted. The more habitual its principles and practices become, the greater is the strength

which they acquire. Indeed nothing is vigorous and powerful in man, beside that which is habitual.

Hence it is plain, that in investigating our religious character we should examine it with particular reference to its *growth*. To grow is its proper nature. If it is not seen to grow, then we do not either see it as it is, or it does not exist in us in its genuine character; but is feeble, fading, sickly, clogged with encumbrances, and in a great measure hidden from view. Man is never for any length of time stationary. Either he is advancing or receding in every thing which pertains to him; and in religion as truly as in his natural endowments or acquisitions. Declension in religion, I need not say, furnishes a melancholy evidence that we are not religious. It is no less obvious, that a regular progress in its various graces and attainments must, on the contrary, become a clear and delightful testimony of our Christian character. There is not only more of religion to be seen in ourselves, but it is discerned with clearer conviction and certainty to be genuine; because it appears, as real religion naturally appears, in its own proper character of growth and improvement. He who loves, fears, and serves God more and more, who is more and more just, sincere, and merciful to his fellow-men, and who is more and more self-governed in all his appetites and passions, weaned from the world, and spiritually and heavenly minded, cannot want the best reasons furnished in our present state to believe that he is a child of God.

SERMON XC.

REGENERATION.

ITS EVIDENCES.

DIFFICULTIES ATTENDING THE APPLICATION OF
THESE EVIDENCES TO OURSELVES.

Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith: prove your own selves; know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?—
2 COR. xiii. 5.

IN the last Discourse but one I proposed from these words to examine,

- I. *Some of the imaginary evidences of regeneration.*
- II. *Some of the real evidences.*
- III. *Some of the difficulties which attend the application of the real evidences to ourselves.*

There has been much debate in the Christian world concerning *the faith of assurance*; or, as it is in better language styled by St. Paul, ‘the full assurance of nope.’ The question debated has, however, not been, whether men *felt assured that they were Christians*, but whether this assurance has been *evangelical*, or built on *satisfactory and scriptural evidence*. That such a faith has existed I have no doubt; nor do I see how it can be rationally doubted. That the apostles were evangelically assured of their own piety, and consequent salvation, must be admitted by all who believe the Scriptures. ‘I have fought a good fight,’ says St. Paul, ‘I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.’—‘For me to live is Christ; to die is gain.’—‘We know,’ says St. John, ‘that we have passed from death unto life.’ From the accounts given us concerning the first martyrs, I think we cannot hesitate to admit that they also were the subjects of the same faith. Nor is the evidence concerning a number of those who have lived and suffered in modern

times less convincing to *me*. These men have in various instances lived in a manner eminently evangelical; have devoted themselves through a long period to the service of God, with so much humility, self-denial, uniformity, steadfastness, and evangelical zeal; have laboured for the good of their fellow-creatures with so much disinterestedness, charity, and constancy; have lived so much above the world, and with a conversation so heavenly, that when they are declaring themselves possessed of this faith, and have died with peace and exultation, which must be supposed to result from it, we cannot, unless by wilful rejection of evidence, hesitate to admit that they were possessed of this enviable attainment. Indeed, I can hardly doubt, that any man who reads their history with candour, will readily admit the doctrine, so far as the men to whom I refer are concerned. But, if these things be admitted, it will probably be readily conceded, that there are in every country and in every age where Christianity prevails, some persons who enjoy the faith or hope of assurance.

At the same time, I am fully persuaded that the number of these persons is not very great. If the Christians and ministers with whom I have had opportunity to converse, many of whom have been eminently exemplary in their lives, may be allowed to stand as representatives of Christians in general, it must certainly be true, that the faith of assurance is not common.

Indeed, I am persuaded, that this blessing is much more frequently experienced in times and places of affliction and persecution, than in seasons of peace and prosperity. Severe trials and sufferings furnish of themselves clearer proofs of the piety of those who are tried, than can ordinarily be furnished by circumstances of ease and quiet. The faith which will patiently submit, which will encounter, which will endure, which will overcome, in periods of great affliction, has in this very process both acquired and exhibited peculiar strength, and furnished evidence

of its genuineness which can hardly be derived from any other source.

At the same time it is, I think, irresistibly inferred from the declarations contained in the word of God, and from the history of his providence, recorded both within and without the Scriptures, that God, in his infinite mercy, furnishes his children with peculiar support and consolation in times of peculiar trial ; and that, as their ' day is,' so he causes their strength to be.' Among the means of consolation enjoyed by Christians, none seems better adapted to furnish them with the necessary support under severe distresses, than an assurance that they are children of God. Accordingly, this very consolation appears to have been given to the suffering saints of the Old and New Testaments, as a peculiar support to them in their peculiar trials. From analogy it might be concluded, and from the history of facts it may, with the strongest probability, if not with absolute certainty, be determined, that the same blessing has been given in times of eminent affliction to saints in every succeeding age of the church.

Still there is no reason to think that the faith of assurance is generally attained among eminent Christians. This fact has, sometimes, been called in question, sometimes denied, and oftener wondered at. ' Why,' it is inquired, ' are not Christians oftener, nay, why are they not generally, assured of their gracious state? There certainly is a difference between sin and holiness, sufficiently broad to be seen and marked. The Scriptures have actually marked this difference with such clearness and exactness, as to give us ample information concerning both the nature and the limits of these great moral attributes. They have separated those who possess them into two classes, not only entirely distinct, but directly opposite to each other: so opposite, that the one class is styled in them, the friends, and the other, the enemies, of God. Farther, they present to us various means of judging, by which we are directed, as well as encouraged and enabled, to try

and estimate our own religious character. The subject is also so spoken of in the Scriptures, as naturally to lead us into the conclusion, that these different characters may be distinctly known; and that it is our duty so to act, as upon the whole to form satisfactory views concerning our moral condition. Finally, the writers of the New Testament, and indeed of the Old also, speak of themselves, as knowing their own piety; and of others, as able to know theirs.

To these observations I answer, in the first place, that holiness and sin are, in themselves, thus clearly distinguishable. Angels cannot but know that they are holy; and fiends, that they are sinful.

Secondly: This difference is sufficiently marked in the Scriptures. If we saw holiness in ourselves exactly as it is exhibited in the Scriptures, that is, unmixed, we should certainly know ourselves to be holy.

Thirdly: Holy and sinful men are just as different from each other, as they are represented in the Scriptures; but this does not enable us to determine which they are.

Fourthly: The means furnished us in the Scriptures of judging concerning our religious character are, undoubtedly, the best which the nature of our circumstances will admit, and such as, if correctly applied to ourselves, and known to be thus applied, would undoubtedly decide this great point in a satisfactory manner. Still this does not infer, that it usually will or can be thus decided.

Fifthly: We are undoubtedly required in the Scriptures to examine ourselves; and the performance of this duty, while it is indispensable on our part, unquestionably may be, and is, of great importance to us; although we may not, as a consequence of it, become possessed of the faith of assurance.

Sixthly: The writers in the Old and New Testaments did, in many instances, certainly know that they were holy; but they were inspired. It will

not, therefore, follow, that others, who are uninspired will, of course, possess the same knowledge of their own state.

Seventhly: The scriptural writers very extensively use the words *know*, and *knowledge*, not in the sense of *absolute science*, but to denote *belief*, *persuasion*, *a strong hope*, &c. in the same manner as these terms are used in common speech. We cannot, therefore, certainly conclude, from the use of these terms with respect to this subject, that the divine writers expected those to whom they wrote generally to possess the faith of assurance.

Finally: It is our duty to possess this faith. It is also our duty to be perfect. Yet St. John says of himself, and all other Christians, 'If we say, that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.' As, therefore, notwithstanding this duty, no man is perfect; so, notwithstanding the duty of obtaining the faith of assurance, few persons may actually possess it.

The real difficulty is chiefly passed by, in all the observations made above; and lies in *applying the scriptural evidences of holiness to our own particular cases*. This subject, I shall now attempt to examine in several particulars.

The difficulties which attend the application of these evidences to ourselves arise from various sources. Among them the following will be found to possess a very serious influence:

1. *The vast importance of the case.*

A case of great moment is at all times apt strongly to agitate our minds. Men deeply interested by any concern are, therefore, considered as less capable of discerning clearly and judging justly, than the same men when dispassionate. As this is the subject, even of proverbial declaration, it cannot need proof. The case in hand is of infinite moment to each individual. Whenever he brings it to view, he is prone to feel a degree, and often not a small one, of anxiety. It is therefore seen, together with the evidences which attend it, by the mind, through the

medium of disturbed feelings. Earnest wishes to find satisfaction, on the one hand, and strong apprehensions lest it should not be found, on the other, naturally disorder that calm temperament, which is so necessary to clear investigation, and satisfactory conclusions. In this state, the mind is prone to be unsatisfied with its own investigation; fears that it has not acted impartially; suspects that it has not viewed the evidence possessed by it in a just light; and when its judgments are favourable to itself, is prone to tremble, lest they have been too favourable, and the result of biassed inclinations, rather than of clear discernment. A presumptuous decision in its favour it perfectly well knows to be full of danger; and is ready to think almost every favourable judgment presumptuous. In this situation, all such judgments are apt to be regarded with a general suspicion; and the mind chooses rather to continue unsatisfied, and to undergo the distresses of anxiety and alarm, than to hazard the danger of ill founded conclusions in its own favour. Most Christians are, I believe, so strongly convinced that a state of anxiety will contribute to make them alive and awake to the danger of backsliding, to quicken them in their duty, and to secure them from carelessness and sloth, and that, therefore, it will have a happy influence towards rendering them safe, as willingly to judge too unfavourably, rather than too favourably, of their own religious character. An unfavourable judgment, they know, does not render the character itself any worse; but only deprives them of the consolation which, with more favourable views of it, they might enjoy; while the contrary opinion might naturally slacken them in their duty; and perhaps prevent them finally from obtaining salvation.

2. *Another source of difficulties is found in the peculiar natural character of those who are employed in this investigation.*

Some of these persons are naturally inclined to hope, others to fear. Some to cheerfulness, others to melancholy. Some are rash, others are cautious.

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Some are ignorant, others are well informed. But the evidences which establish, or should establish, a favourable judgment of our Christian character, are in substance always the same. As applied to persons of these different characters, they must, however, be seen in very different lights; because, although religion is the same thing, yet so much of the peculiar natural character of the man remains after he has become religious, as to render him a very different man from every other religious man. Paul and John were both eminently religious. Their religion was the same thing; but the men were widely different from each other. If Christians so eminent and excellent could differ in this manner, how much more different from each other must be ordinary Christians? How much more must the natural character remain in *them*? particularly, such as in a greater or less degree are sinful? The whole object, therefore, presented to the judgment of the individual must differ, and often greatly, in different cases.

For example: One person becomes the subject of piety, after a wise, careful, religious education, early and uninterrupted habits of conscientiousness, in the possession of a naturally sweet and amiable temper, in an original and regular course of filial duty, fraternal kindness, and exemplary conduct to those around him, and in the midst of a life generally commendable and lovely. Another, scarcely educated at all, possessed of a rough, gross, and violent disposition, and shamefully vicious from early life, is sanctified in the midst of scandalous indulgences, and rank habits of sin.

It is perfectly obvious, that these two persons will differ mightily from each other in the visible degree of that change of conduct which flows from their religion. The former will, perhaps, be scarcely changed at all, even to an observing eye; for he has heretofore done, and in a certain sense loved to do, in many particulars, the very thing which religion requires, and to which it prompts; and thus the tenor

of his life will seem to those around him much the same after, as before, his conversion. The latter sanctified in the same degree, will, it is plain, change almost the whole course of his conduct, and assume a life entirely new, and directly opposite to that which he led before.

Nor will the difference be small in the internal state of these individuals. The sanctified affections and purposes of the former will, in many instances, so blend themselves with those which he has derived from nature and habit, as to be often distinguished with difficulty, and not unfrequently to be entirely undistinguishable. Those of the latter, on the contrary, will be wholly opposite, in most instances, to all that he has heretofore thought, felt, and designed.

As the internal and external conduct of these individuals is the sole ground on which each must judge of himself, as well as be judged of by others, it is perfectly obvious, that the objects concerning which they are respectively to judge are widely different from each other. But this is not all. The *optics* with which these persons judge concerning their religious state will, plainly, be widely different. Our dispositions naturally influence our judgment, and usually enter much more largely into the opinions which we form, than we are aware. Thus a person strongly inclined to hope will almost, of course, judge favourably, when a person equally inclined to fear would, in the very same case, judge unfavourably, concerning himself. Cheerful persons naturally entertain comfortable views concerning themselves; those who are melancholy, such, and often such only, as are uncomfortable, discouraging, and distressing. The rash form bold and presumptuous opinions without hesitation; the cautious admit opinions favourable to themselves slowly, even when they are admitted upon acknowledged evidence. The ignorant must be very imperfectly fitted to consider the various means of evidence, all of which ought to be consulted, in forming our opinions

concerning this important subject; while the enlightened Christian must be much more competent to draw up a well founded determination.

3. *The similar nature of those which we call natural views and affections, to those which are evangelical, furnishes another source of these difficulties.*

Love and hatred, hope and fear, joy and sorrow, confidence and shame, together with various other affections, and views of the mind, really exist and operate in the Christian as *natural views and affections*, and not merely *evangelical*. The objects which excite these affections in both senses are often the same. The emotions themselves are also so much alike, as perceived by the mind, that mankind universally, and the scriptural writers as well as others, call them by the same names. When both are described by those who are the subjects of them, the description, to a great extent, is commonly the same. It will, therefore, be easily believed that they are so similar in their nature, as, when they arise from the same objects, to render it difficult for the Christian in whom they exist, and at times impossible, to distinguish them from each other. It will be also easily seen, that when he who is not a Christian, has these affections and views excited in his mind, by the objects which excite the corresponding evangelical affections in the mind of a Christian, he may, in many instances, find it very difficult to discern that they are not evangelical.

To illustrate this subject clearly to the view of my audience, I will consider it more particularly.

A Christian loves God, his Son, his Spirit, his law, his gospel, his sabbath, his worship, and his children. Why does he love them? For two reasons. One is; *their nature is agreeable to the relish of his mind*. The other is, *they are useful, and therefore pleasing, to himself*. For both these reasons he is bound to love them. But, when he regards all these objects with this affection, it will be often difficult, and sometimes impossible, for him to determine whether his emotions are merely natural, wholly

evangelical, or mixed. He knows that he exercises a love to God; but may be unable to determine whether he loves the character of God, considered by itself; whether he loves the divine perfections for what they are; or whether he loves God, because he regards him as a friend to himself; and delights in his perfections, because he considers them as engaged and operating to promote his present and eternal good. It would be difficult for most persons to determine precisely what views they would form of this glorious Being, if it were revealed to them that he was their enemy.

As it is often difficult for the *Christian* to distinguish his natural affections which, so long as he is a man, he will always continue to exercise, from the corresponding evangelical ones, which he exercises as a Christian; so it must evidently be more difficult for an *unrenewed* man, who has never had any other beside natural affections, to discern that these are not evangelical. When he loves God, and other divine objects, in what manner shall he determine that he loves him only because he believes him reconciled to himself? When he delights in the divine perfections, it will not be easy for him to see that it is only because he supposes them to be engaged to promote his welfare. When he loves the Scriptures, it will be difficult for him to perceive that it is only because of their sublimity and beauty, the good sense which they contain, the happy influence which they have on mankind, and the comforting promises which he considers them as speaking to himself. When he loves Christians, it will often be beyond his power to determine that it is not because of their natural amiableness of character, the agreeableness of their manners, their friendship or kind offices to himself, and their general usefulness to others with whom he is connected.

A person is quiet under provocations. This may arise from meekness. It may also arise from a sense of the wisdom, the dignity, and the usefulness of this spirit. He is kind to enemies. This may

arise from the desire of obtaining the peculiar evidence that he is a good man, furnished by this exercise of Christian benevolence, from a sense of the nobleness of forgiveness, or from the danger of not finding himself forgiven.

I might extend this course of thought through all the objects of self-examination, and shew that similar difficulties attend them all. Every Christian must, I think, have experienced them in his own case; and every person, accustomed to converse much with others on the grounds of their hope concerning themselves, must have perceived them continually occurring in the progress of every such conversation.

4. *Another source of this difficulty is found in the transient nature of all our emotions.*

By this I intend, that every exercise of our affections has only a momentary existence in the mind. It rises, is indulged, and is gone. All our knowledge of its nature, in the mean time, exists in the consciousness of it *while it is passing*; in our remembrance of that consciousness, *known to be imperfect*; and in our acquaintance with its *effects*, often of a character more or less doubtful. Few words can be necessary to shew that our knowledge of these exercises, gained in this manner, must be attended by many imperfections. Our opportunity for viewing it while it is passing is so short, and often so carelessly employed; our remembrance of it when it is past is so far removed from certain accuracy; and its effects may be so easily, and for aught that appears, so justly attributed to various causes, that the whole view taken of them by the mind will frequently be obscure, and its decision unsatisfactory.

Hence appears the wisdom of fastening upon a course of such exercises, as furnishing far better means of determining our religious character, rather than resting it upon a few. A character may be successfully discerned in *many* exercises of a similar kind, which usually we shall attempt in vain to discover, to our satisfaction, in a *small* number. A

thousand blades of grass will, in the spring, give a green and living aspect to that field, which with a hundred would still retain the russet appearance of absolute death.

5. *Another fruitful source of the same difficulties is furnished by the imperfect state of religion in the mind.*

This indeed may, in an extensive sense, be considered as the general source of them all. I have heretofore observed, that angels cannot but know that they are holy, and fiends, that they are sinful. Were we perfectly holy, then, we should certainly know this to be our character.

But there are particular difficulties attending this subject, which deserve to be marked.

The mind of every Christian experiences *many alterations of holiness and sin*. Temptations often and unexpectedly intrude. The objects which engross the *whole* heart of the sinner, unhappily engage at times, in *greater or less degrees*, that of the Christian. Nor is their influence always transient. David, Solomon, and other saints, mentioned in the Scriptures, sinned for a length of time. Not a small number of sins are committed in thought, word, and action, in the brighter and better seasons, nay, in the brightest and best. ‘I sin,’ says Bishop Beveridge; ‘I repent of my sins, and sin in my repentance. I pray for forgiveness, and sin in my prayers. I resolve against my future sin, and sin in forming my resolutions. So that I may say, my whole life is almost a continued course of sin.’ This is the language of one of the best men that ever lived. A still better man has said, ‘The good that I would, that I do not; but the evil that I would not, that I do. I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me. After the inward man, I delight in the law of God. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members. O wretched man, that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?’

Now the whole life, not of such men as these, but of men who, though generally of a similar character, are greatly inferior to these in religious excellence, is almost always the real object of a Christian's examination. This also is to be continually examined, the worst and the best parts alike. But it is plain, that the comfortable evidence of our piety, furnished by the prevalence of holiness in the best seasons, will be always impaired by contrary evidence in periods of declension; will sometimes be rendered obscure, and at others overbalanced. It is farther evident that, as our whole judgment will and ought to be usually made up, partly of the evidence furnished by our present state, and partly of our past judgments, and the evidence on which they were founded; evidence contradicting, impairing, and obscuring each other; a degree of confusion and uncertainty in the views of the mind concerning its religious character, will almost necessarily result in many instances, from this complicated and perplexed state of things.

6. *No small difficulties are often thrown in our way by the backslidings of others.*

Many persons who are really Christians, decline at times from holiness of life so greatly, and so long, as to excite not only the sneers and contempt, but the just censures also, of those who are not Christians; and the extreme regret, and the Christian discipline, of those who are. Other men, in cases of this nature, frequently question or deny the very existence of religion. Christians do not indeed go this unwarrantable length; but they cannot avoid recollecting that, frequently, the persons who have thus declined were in their view better than themselves and feeling the hopes which they have entertained of their own piety greatly lessened. They are compelled to doubt of the religion of these men, and almost irresistibly question the reality of their own.

There are other persons who strongly believe themselves to be religious; and who at the same time live in such a manner as to persuade others that they are eminent Christians. Judas, Hymenæus

Philetus, and others, were of this character, and multitudes more in every succeeding age. When these persons fall, all the evidence which convinced either themselves or others of their piety, is plainly proved to be unsolid, and we are naturally led to ask, whether the evidence on which *we* have relied, as the foundation of our own hope, be not the very same ; or, if it is known to be different, whether we have reason to think it at all better. In this way we naturally come to suspect the grounds on which the belief of our piety has rested, and to doubt whether we are not equally deceived with *them*.

7. *I am of opinion that God, for wise and good reasons, administers his spiritual providence in such a manner, as to leave his children destitute of the faith of assurance, for their own good.*

This opinion, I am well aware, will most probably be doubted, although I entertain not a doubt of it myself. It is proper, therefore, that I should mention some reasons which induce me to adopt it.

(1.) *It is perfectly plain, that the evidence enjoyed by Christians, concerning their piety, is in no regular manner or degree proportioned to their real excellence of character.* The proof of this position is complete, both from our own observation, and from the history of experimental and practical religion, given us in the lives of great multitudes of eminently good men. Such men, after having enjoyed for a long time the most consoling evidence of their good estate, have, through periods also long, been distressed with doubts and darkness, and sometimes with deep despondence, and have nevertheless afterward obtained the same consolations throughout their remaining lives. To such seasons the psalmist plainly alludes in many declarations, descriptions and prayers. These are the seasons, in which ‘ he speaks of God as hiding his face from him ;’ and of himself, as disquieted, troubled, sorrowful, mourning, as almost gone, as having his feet in the miry pit, and as overwhelmed by the billows of affliction. Such seasons are also familiarly spoken of by Christians,

as times of darkness and sorrow, in which the light of God's countenance is hidden from them.

(2.) There is not, I believe, a *single promise in the gospel to Christians, as such, of the faith of assurance*; nor any direct intimation, that they shall possess evidence of their piety, proportioned to the degree in which it exists. All the promises of this nature seem to be indefinite; and to indicate, that Christians shall enjoy *some evidence* of this nature, rather than to point out *the degree* in which it shall be enjoyed. 'The Spirit testifies with their spirits,' in a degree and manner accordant with his pleasure, 'that they are children of God.' It is indeed said, that 'if any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.' But the word *know*, in this case, plainly means no other than that he shall have a strong and satisfying *persuasion*; for it cannot be said, that *knowledge*, in the proper sense, is ever attainable with regard to this subject. And this strong persuasion, that the Bible is the word of God, may exist without any satisfactory evidence that we are his children.

(3.) There seems to be a *plain and important reason* why most Christians should be left in *some degree of uncertainty* concerning this subject. In all the earlier stages of their piety, and in all other cases in which it is not eminently vigorous, they would be prone, if they possessed high consolatory evidence, especially if they possessed full assurance of their renovation, imperfect as they then always are, to be at ease; to settle quietly down in that imperfect state; and in this manner to come far short of those religious attainments which now they actually make; and perhaps finally to fall away. As the case now is, their fears serve to quicken them no less than their hopes; and by the influence of both they continue to advance in holiness to the end of life.

(4.) The *fact* is, unquestionably, as I have stated it; and it cannot be rationally denied to be a part of the spiritual providence of God.

REMARKS.

1. From these observations, *we learn the necessity of performing daily and carefully the duty of self-examination.* If such difficulties attend this duty, we are bound to exercise proportionally greater care and exactness in performing it.

2. *We are taught to rest our hopes on the general tenor of our dispositions and conduct, and not on particular views, affections, and actions.* These may be counterfeited; but to counterfeit the whole tenor of a life seems impossible.

3. *We perceive the necessity of inquiring particularly whether we increase in holiness.* Evangelical holiness increases by its own nature, though irregularly. False religious affections by their nature decline at no very late periods.

4. *We learn the necessity of searching the Scriptures continually for that evidence which alone is genuine, and on which alone we can safely rest.* In the Scriptures only is this evidence to be found.

5. *How conspicuous are the wisdom and goodness of God, in causing the backslidings and other defects of good men to be recorded for the instruction and consolation of Christians in all succeeding ages!* These evils, and the distresses and doubts which they occasion, attended them. Still they were truly pious. They may attend us therefore, while we may nevertheless be also subjects of piety.

6. *The same wisdom and goodness are still more conspicuous in the manner, in which the Psalms are written.* The Psalms are chiefly an account of the experimental religion of inspired men. In this account we find that many of them, particularly David, the principal writer, experienced all the doubts, difficulties, and sorrows, which are now suffered by good men. It is highly probable that vast multitudes of Christians have by these two means been preserved from final despondence.

7. *This subject, in its nature, furnishes strong, though indirect, consolation to Christians.* When they find

doubts, and consequent distress, concerning their religious character multiplied, they here see that they *may* be thus multiplied, in perfect consistency with the fact that they themselves are Christians ; and are thus prevented from sinking into despair.

8. *We learn the absolute necessity of betaking ourselves to God in daily prayer, for his unerring guidance in this difficult path of duty.* If so many embarrassments attend this important employment, the assistance of the Divine Spirit is plainly indispensable to our safety and success. If this assistance be faithfully sought, we know that it will be certainly granted.

9. *We here discern the goodness manifested in that indispensable and glorious promise ; ‘ I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.’* For creatures, struggling with so many difficulties, to be *left* at all, would be inconceivably dangerous ; to be *forsaken* would be fatal. But the divine presence, in the midst of all these, and even much greater dangers, furnishes complete and final safety to every child of God.

SERMON XCI.

THE LAW OF GOD. THE LAW PERFECT.

The law of the Lord is perfect.—PSALM xix. 7.

IN the whole preceding series of Discourses I have examined with attention the principal DOCTRINES contained in the Scriptures. Particularly, I have exhibited the existence and perfections of *God*, and his works of creation and providence ; the character and circumstances of *man*, both before and after his apostasy, and the impossibility of his justification by his personal obedience. I have considered at length the character and mediation of *Christ*, and the nature of evangelical justification through his righteousness ; the character and agency of the *Holy Ghost* ; the necessity and nature of regeneration, its antecedents,

attendants, consequences, and evidences. All these united, constitute the body of those peculiarly important truths, to which the Scriptures have required us to render religious faith.

The second great division of subjects in such a system is formed of the scriptural PRECEPTS, requiring of us those internal and external acts, commonly termed *the duty or duties of mankind*. We are not, however, to suppose that *faith in the doctrines of the Scriptures* is not itself a *prime duty* of man. The contrary has, I trust, been amply proved. Nor are we to suppose, that any one of these doctrines has not naturally an important *practical influence* on mankind. The contrary to this also has, it is presumed, been extensively shewn. Finally : We are not to suppose that *faith in Christ*, and *repentance towards God*, are duties of fallen beings, less *real*, less *necessary*, less *essential*, or less *acceptable*, than any other duties whatever. The conformity of the understanding and the heart to every doctrine of the Scriptures, is, by the authority of God, made equally a duty with obedience to every precept. All that can with propriety be said of this nature is, that those which are customarily called the *doctrines* of the Scriptures, are usually presented to us rather in the form of *truths* which we are to *believe*, than of commands which we are to *obey* ; and that the precepts are commonly given to us in their *own proper form*, requiring our obedience *directly*.

At the same time, it is to be observed, that a conformity of our hearts and lives to the doctrines of the gospel is often *expressly enjoined* by the Scriptures. To repent of our sins, and to believe in Christ, are the immediate objects of the great precepts of the gospel. It is farther to be observed, that every precept becomes, by a slight alteration in the phraseology, a *doctrine*. For example ; 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,' is easily altered into a mere truth, only by changing the phraseology into 'It is right, or it is thy duty, to love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart.' A cordial faith in this

declaration is here, as with respect to every other precept, the spirit whence is derived all genuine obedience.

Truth is commonly divided into that which is *practical*, and that which is *speculative*. But moral truth cannot, in the strict sense, be justly divided in this manner. Every moral truth is of a practical nature. Its influence, I acknowledge, is in some cases indirect; while in others it is direct. But it can never be truly denied in any case that its influence is really of this nature.

The observations, which I intend to make on the several subjects, included in the *second great division* of the System of Theology, I propose to preface with a *general account of the divine law*. The doctrine which I mean to discuss in this account is that which the text expresses in the very best terms which can be chosen; *viz.*

THE LAW OF JEHOVAH IS PERFECT.

In proof of this truth I allege the following considerations.

1. *The law of God is the result of his infinite wisdom and goodness.*

It cannot be supposed, that infinite wisdom and goodness would form a rule, for the government of moral beings, which did not possess such attributes as must render it a *perfect directory of their moral conduct*. It may easily be believed, that God may make moral beings, of many different classes; some of superior, and some of inferior capacities; but it cannot be imagined that he would not require of all such beings a character and conduct the best of which they were *naturally* capable. Inferior wisdom and goodness might be unable to devise, or uninclined to require, the best conduct and character in moral creatures; or to point out the *means* by which this character could be most easily and perfectly formed, or the *conduct* in which it would most advantageously operate. But none of these things are attributable to infinite wisdom and goodness thus

employed. They of course must require the best character and conduct, must point out the best means of forming it, and the best modes in which it can operate. To suppose a law which is the result of these attributes not to be perfect, is to suppose, either that God did not know what would be the best character in his moral creatures, or did not choose to require it of them. Both parts of this alternative are too obviously absurd to need a refutation.

Farther: A law is always the expression of the will of the lawgiver; and is of course an expression of his own character. This is pre-eminently applicable to the law of God. In forming it, he was under no necessity, and could have no motive beside what is involved in his own pleasure, to induce him to form it in any given manner. The things which it requires are the things which he approves, and is seen to approve; the things in which he delights, and is seen to delight; the things, therefore, which entirely shew his real character. But the things actually required include all which are due from his moral creatures to *him*, to *each other*, and to *themselves*; or, in other words, all their internal and external moral conduct. But it cannot be supposed, that God would exhibit his own *perfect* character *imperfectly*, in a case of this magnitude. That in a law expressing thus his own character, and seen to express it; a law from which they must of necessity learn his character more certainly than from any thing else; a law which regulated and required all the moral conduct ever required of them, he should not prescribe a perfect collection of rules, a collection absolutely perfect, is a supposition amounting to nothing less than this: that in exhibiting his character to the intelligent universe he would present it in a false light, and lead them by a solemn act of his own, necessarily to consider him either as a weak or as an immoral being.

2. *The law of God is perfectly fitted to the state and capacity of intelligent creatures.*

The divine law is wholly included in two precepts; 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart; and thy neighbour as thyself.' These are so *short*, as to be necessarily included in a single very short sentence; so *intelligible*, as to be understood by every moral being who is capable of comprehending the meaning of the words, *God* and *neighbour*; so *easily remembered*, as to render it impossible for them to escape from our memory, unless by a wanton, criminal negligence of ours; and so *easily applicable to every case of moral action*, as not to be mistaken, unless through indisposition to obey. At the same time, obedience to them is rendered perfectly *obvious*, and perfectly *easy* to every mind which is not indisposed to obey them. The very disposition itself, if sincere and entire, is either entire obedience, or the unfailing means of that external conduct by which the obedience is in some cases completed. The *disposition to obey* is also confined to a *single affection of the heart*, easily distinguishable from all other affections: viz. *love*. 'Love,' saith St. Paul, 'is the fulfilling of the law.' The humblest and most ignorant moral creatures, therefore, are in this manner efficaciously preserved from mistaking their duty.

In the mean time, these two precepts, notwithstanding their brevity, are so *comprehensive*, as to include every possible moral action. The archangel is not raised above their control, nor can any action of his exceed that bound which they prescribe. The child who has passed the verge of moral agency, is not placed beneath their regulation; and whatever virtue he may exercise, is no other than a fulfilment of their requisitions. All the duties which we immediately owe to God, to our fellow-creatures, and to ourselves, are by these precepts alike comprehended and required. In a word, endlessly various as moral action may be, it exists in no form or instance in which he who perfectly obeys these precepts will not have done his duty, and will not find himself justified and accepted by God.

3. *The law of God requires the best possible moral character.*

To require and accomplish this great object, an object in its importance literally immense, is supremely worthy of the wisdom and goodness of this glorious Being. To make his moral creatures virtuous, is unquestionably the only method of rendering them really and extensively useful, and laying the only solid foundation for their enduring happiness. But all virtue is summed up in the fulfilment of these two commands; 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart; and thy neighbour as thyself.' In doing this every individual becomes as amiable, excellent, dignified, and useful, as with his own capacity he can be. Should he advance in his capacity through endless duration, all the good which he will ever do, all the honour which he will ever render to his Creator, all the excellence, amiableness, and dignity which he will ever acquire, will be nothing but obedience to these two commands. The beauty and glory of the evangelical character, the rapturous flame which glows in the breast of a seraph, the transcendent exaltation of an archangel, is completely included in 'loving God with all the heart, and his neighbour as himself.' Nay, the infinite loveliness, the supreme glory of the Godhead, is no other than this disposition, boundlessly exerted in the uncreated mind, and producing, in an unlimited extent, and an eternal succession, its proper and divine effects on the intelligent universe. 'God,' saith St. John, 'is love.'

4. *The law of God proposes and accomplishes the best possible end.*

The only ultimate good is happiness; by which I intend enjoyment; whether springing from the mind itself, or flowing into it from external sources. Perfect happiness is perfect good; or, in other words, includes whatever is desirable; and this is the good which the divine law proposes, as its own proper and supreme end.

This end is with exact propriety divisible, and is

customarily divided into two great parts ; the first, usually termed *the glory of God* : the second, *the happiness of the intelligent creation*.

The original and essential glory of God is *his ability and disposition to accomplish perfect happiness*. This is his inherent, unchangeable, and eternal perfection. But the glory of God, to which I refer, is what is often called his *declarative* glory, and is no other than this very perfection manifested in his *conduct*, immediately by himself, and, immediately in their conduct, by the intelligent creation. In this sense, the glory of God is proposed and accomplished by his law, when he prescribes to his intelligent creatures, and produces in them, a disposition to 'love him with all the heart, and each other as themselves.' This disposition is, beyond all estimation, the most lovely, the most excellent, the most glorious work of the Creator's hands ; incomparably the greatest proof of his sufficiency and inclination to effectuate perfect good ; and therefore infinitely honourable to his character. In the exercise of this disposition on their part, and in its genuine effects, they render to him also, voluntarily and directly, all the honour which can be rendered to the infinite mind by intelligent creatures.

At the same time, *the divine law is the source of perfect happiness to them*. Voluntary beings are the only original sources of happiness : and *virtue*, which is nothing but this disposition, is in them the only productive cause of happiness. Under the influence of it all beings in whom it prevails, unite to do the utmost good in their power. The good therefore which is actually done by them is the greatest good which can be derived from the efforts of intelligent creatures. As in this manner they become perfectly lovely, praiseworthy, and rewardable in the sight of God ; he *can*, with the utmost propriety, and therefore certainly *will*, reward them, by actually communicating to them the most exalted happiness of which they are capable. The kingdom of glory in the heavens, with its endless and perfect providential dis-

pensions, will to saints and angels constitute this reward.

I have mentioned the *glory of God* as the first great division of the perfect end proposed by the divine law. The glory of God is *that* in which his *happiness* consists; the object infinitely enjoyed by the infinite mind; the sufficiency for all good, not only existing and enjoyed by contemplation, but operating also, and enjoyed in its genuine and proper effects.

It ought to be observed, that there are no other possible means of accomplishing this illustrious end beside this disposition. Intelligent beings are the only beings by whom God can be thus glorified. They are the only beings who can understand either his character or his works, or perceive the glory which he directly manifests in them. They are also the only beings who can render to him love, reverence, or obedience; and thus honour his character in such a manner as this can be done by creatures. Without them the universe, with all its furniture and splendour, would still be a solitude.

At the same time, intelligent beings alone either produce or enjoy happiness in any great degree.

But there is no other disposition in such beings beside this which can voluntarily glorify God, or produce important and enduring happiness. It is hardly necessary for me to observe, that no obedience and no regard whatever, rendered by rational creatures to God, can be of any value, or in any degree amiable or acceptable, except that which is voluntary; or that towards beings who did not love him he could not exercise any complacency. It is scarcely more necessary to observe, that beings who did not voluntarily produce happiness, could neither enjoy it themselves, nor yield it to others. The seat of happiness is the mind; and the first or original happiness which it finds, is ever found in its own approbation of its conduct, and the delightful nature of its affections. But no mind can be self-approved which does not first love God and its fellow-creatures; and no affections can be delightful, except

those which spring from the same disposition. Its views of God, and its affections towards him, its apprehensions of his complacency towards itself, and its enjoyment of his blessings; constitute the second great division of its happiness. But no mind can have delightful views of God, or delightful affections towards him, or be the object of his complacency, except that which loves him supremely. The third great division of this subject consists in the esteem, the love, and the kind offices, mutually interchanged by rational beings. It is perfectly obvious that these can never exist in any material degree, where the second command of this law is not cordially obeyed. But the mind, influenced by 'the love which is the fulfilling of the law,' is self-approved, approved by God, and approved by its fellow-creatures. All its affections also towards itself, its Creator, and the intelligent universe, are delightful. At the same time, all its actions are productive of glory to the Creator, and of good to his creation.

Thus the law of God, by laying hold on this single great principle, has directed the whole energy of the mind to the production of the best of all ends, in the best possible manner.

REMARKS.

From these observations it appears,

1. *That the law of God is, and must of necessity be, unchangeable and eternal.*

Our Saviour informs us, that 'heaven and earth shall sooner pass away, than one jot, or one tittle, of the law shall fail.' This declaration has, I presume, seemed extraordinary to every reader of the New Testament. To many it has, in all probability, appeared incredible. But, if I mistake not, these observations furnish us not only with ample evidence of its truth, but with ample reasons, why it should be true. A law, which is the result of infinite wisdom and goodness, which is perfectly fitted to the state and capacity of intelligent creatures, which requires the best possible moral character, which proposes

and accomplishes the best possible end, and without which neither the glory of God, nor the happiness of the intelligent creation, could be established or perpetuated, plainly cannot and ought not to be changed. Were God to change it, he must change it for the worse ; from a perfect law to an imperfect one. Whatever rule he should prescribe in its place for the conduct of his moral creatures, must require something which is wrong, or fail to require something which is right. Neither of these could be just, or wise, or good. Nor could his wisdom, justice, or goodness be manifested, or even preserved, in the establishment of such a law ; much less in annulling a perfect law, and substituting an imperfect one in its place. To give up this law would be to sacrifice his own glory, and the happiness of his intelligent creation. These united constitute the very end, for which the heavens and the earth were made. In the case supposed, therefore, the heavens and the earth would exist to no purpose, that is, to no purpose worthy of Jehovah.

2. *This subject furnishes us with one affecting view of the evil of sin.*

‘Sin is a transgression of the law :’ that is, sin is the disposition of the heart, and the conduct of the life, directly opposed to what the law requires. It is directly opposed to the decisions of infinite wisdom and goodness, to the best possible character, and to the best possible end ; the glory of God, and the supreme good of the intelligent creation. Of all these the law is either the transcript, or the indispensable means. So far as sin has power to operate, it operates to their destruction ; and its native tendency would prevent the glory of God, and the good of the universe.

The evil of sin does not lie in the power of the sinner to accomplish his evil designs ; but in the nature of the designs themselves, and the disposition which gave them birth ; and must ever bear some general proportion to the extent of the mischief which it would accomplish, if it were permitted to

operate without restraint. From what has been said, it is plain that this mischief transcends all finite comprehension. The evil, therefore, which is inherent in it must be incalculably great.

We see this truth verified in the present world. All the misery suffered here is the effect of sin. Sin blotted out the bliss of Paradise, and established in its place private wretchedness and public suffering. The smile of complacency it changed into the gloomy frown of wrath and malice. For the embrace of friendship it substituted the attack of the assassin. The song of joy it converted into a groan of anguish; the ascription of praise it commuted for the blasphemies of impiety. What then must be the evils which it would accomplish, were it let loose upon the universe, were it to invade the kingdom of glory, as it once intruded into Eden, and ravage eternity as it has ravaged the little periods of time?

3. *We learn from this subject the absurdity of antinomianism.*

Two of the prominent antinomian doctrines are, that the law of God is not a *rule of duty* to Christians; and that the *transgressions* of it by Christians are not sins.

'Sin,' saith St. John, 'is the transgression of the law.' It is a bold assertion then, an assertion demanding a warrant which can be pleaded by no man, that *there is such a thing, or that there can be such a thing, as a transgression of the law which is not sinful.* Why are not the transgressions of Christians sinful? Is it because they are holy beings? Adam was perfectly holy; yet one transgression of his ruined the world. Angels were perfectly holy, in a state far superior to that of Adam; yet one transgression of theirs turned them out of heaven. Is it because Christians are redeemed? The mercy of God displayed in their redemption only increases their obligation to obey, and therefore enhances every transgression. Is it because God has promised that they shall persevere, and that they shall be saved? This

promise is an exercise of divine mercy; has exactly the same influence; and, in the case supposed, can produce no other effect. Why then are the transgressions of Christians not sinful? To this question they will in vain search for an answer.

Why is the law no longer a rule of righteousness to Christians? Is it because they are no longer under its condemning sentence? For this very reason they are under increased obligations to obey its precepts. Is it because they are placed under a better rule, or a worse one? A better rule cannot exist; a worse, God would not prescribe. Are not Christians required to glorify God? Are they not bound to promote the happiness of each other, and their fellow-men? Are they not required to conform to the dictates of infinite wisdom and goodness; to sustain the best moral character; and to fulfil the true end of their being? 'To love God with all the heart, and their neighbour as themselves,' is to do all these things in the manner most pleasing, and in the only manner which is pleasing, to God.

To remove a Christian from the obligation which he is under to obey the law of God, is to remove him from all obligation to perform any part of his duty as a rational being to God, or to his fellow-creatures; for every part of this duty is required by the divine law. In other words, it is to discharge him from all obligation to be virtuous. What end must we then suppose Christians are intended to answer, while they continue in the world? Certainly, none worthy of God, none worthy of the mediation of Christ, none worthy of the Christian character.

Antinomians forget that 'he who is born of God, loveth God, and knoweth God;' that 'he who loveth not, knoweth not God;' and that 'this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.' They forget that Christ died 'to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.'

4. We are here furnished with one interesting proof of the divine revelation of the Scriptures.

It is perfectly obvious to all who hear me, that a

book professing to be a revelation, must, whether false or true, depend in a great measure on its own internal character for evidence of its divine origin. The things which it contains must be such as become the character of God. Many of them may be mysterious and inexplicable; because the nature of the subjects may be such as to transcend the human comprehension, or lie beyond the reach of human investigation. There are subjects also of which it may be necessary to know a part; and that part, though sufficiently disclosed, if considered *by itself* only, may yet be connected with others, whose existence it will indicate, but whose nature it will not at all disclose. When subjects of this kind are presented to us, we may, if we are disposed to inquire into them extensively, be easily perplexed, and easily lost.

But whatever is revealed must *consist with the character of God*; or it cannot be admitted as a revelation. Some things also contained in a real revelation, must be *plainly worthy of their Author*, and not merely not *unworthy*; must be honourable to his character, superior to the discoveries of the human mind, and such as cannot be reasonably believed to have been the inventions of men.

Perfectly correspondent with all these remarks is the law under contemplation. This truth will advantageously appear by a comparison of it with the most perfect human laws. I shall select for this purpose those of Great Britain.

The *statute laws* of that kingdom are contained, if I mistake not, in about eighteen or twenty folio, or about fifty octavo volumes. The *common*, or as it is sometimes styled, the *unwritten law*, occupies a number of volumes far greater. To understand them is a work of deep science; the employment of the first human talents, and the labour of a life. The great body of them can never be known by the generality of men, and must therefore be very imperfect rules of their conduct.

In the mean time, multitudes of cases are conti-

nually occurring which they do not reach at all. Those which they actually reach, they affect in many instances injuriously, and in many more imperfectly. The system of happiness which they propose is extremely defective, a bare state of tolerable convenience; and even that attended with many abatements. They also extend their influence only to a speck of earth, and a moment of time. Yet these laws were devised, reviewed, and amended, by persons of the first human consideration for learning and wisdom.

The law which we have been examining, is comprised in two commands only; is so short, so intelligible, so capable of being remembered and applied, as to be perfectly fitted to the understanding and use of every moral being. At the same time, it is so comprehensive, as to reach perfectly every possible moral action, to preclude every wrong, and to secure every right. It is equally fitted to men and angels, to earth and heaven. Its control extends with the same efficacy and felicity to all worlds, and to all periods. It governs the universe, it reaches through eternity. The system of happiness proposed and accomplished by it is perfect, endless, and for ever progressive. Must not candour, must not prejudice itself, confess, with the magicians of Egypt, that here 'is the finger of God?'

But if this is from God, the Scriptures must be acknowledged to have the same origin. In the Scriptures alone is this law contained. Nay, the Scriptures themselves are chiefly this law, expanded into more minute precepts, and more multiplied applications; enforced by happy comments, and illustrated by useful examples; especially the example presented to us in the perfect and glorious life of the Son of God.

SERMON XCII.

THE LAW OF GOD.

THE FIRST AND GREAT COMMANDMENT.

LOVE TO GOD.

And one of the scribes came, and, having heard them reasoning together, and perceived that he had answered them well, asked him, *Which is the first commandment of all?* And Jesus answered him, *The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; this is the first commandment.*—MARK xii. 28—30.

IN the last Discourse I made a number of general observations on the perfection of the divine law. I shall now proceed to consider, somewhat more particularly, the *nature and import* of the *first and greatest commandment* of that law; the command which regulates our *piety to God*.

In the text we are informed, that a scribe, a man learned in the Scriptures, and accustomed to expound them to others, pleased with Christ's refutation of the Sadducees, and the proofs which he had unanswerably given of a future existence, asked him, 'Which is the first commandment of all?' that is, the first in rank, obligation, and importance. Christ, quoting Deut. vi. 4, informs him, that the first command in this sense is, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with **all thy heart**, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.'

In this command, it is to be observed, there is one thing only required; and that is *love*. It is, however, *love* in a *comprehensive* sense; including several exercises of the mind, easily and customarily distinguished from each other, as might indeed be naturally expected from the phraseology of the command.

It is farther to be observed, that the love here enjoined is required to exist in such a degree as to occupy the whole heart, the whole soul, the whole mind, and the whole strength. The word, here rendered *soul*, seems originally to have been used to denote the principle of animal life, and to have been commonly used in this sense by the Greeks; as the two corresponding words of their respective languages were by the Jews and Romans. The word, translated *mind*, is commonly used to denote the *understanding*, and seems plainly to have been used in this manner here; since the scribe expresses this as the meaning of it in his answer. The import of this command may, then, be stated thus:—‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thine understanding, and with all thy strength, throughout all thy life.’ In other words, we are required, under the influence of this disposition, to devote, throughout our lives, all our faculties and services to the glory of Jehovah. Our hearts and voices, our understandings and our hands, are to be entirely and voluntarily dedicated to his service.

I have already observed, that *love*, in this comprehensive sense, includes several exercises of the mind, easily and customarily distinguished. It will be one object of this Discourse to exhibit them with this distinction.

1. *Love to God*, as required by this command, is *good-will to him, his designs, and interests*.

By *good-will*, in this case, I intend the very same benevolence, formerly described as one of the attendants of regeneration, and then mentioned as extending to the Creator and his intelligent creatures. Not a small number of divines have supposed, that love, in this sense, is neither required nor exerted towards the Creator. ‘God,’ say they, ‘being supremely and eternally blessed; and the success of his designs, and the prosperity of his interests, being perfectly secured by his power, knowledge, and presence; there can be no necessity nor room for any exercise of our good-will towards him or them. Be

nevolence is with propriety exercised towards man, because he needs it; but cannot with any such propriety be exercised towards God, who is so far from *needing* any thing, that he gives unto all life, and breath, and all things.'

These observations are undoubtedly specious. Yet the reasoning contained in them is totally erroneous; and the conclusion intended to be derived from them false and mistaken. To admit it, is to give up the first duty of man.

Benevolence depends not, either for its obligation or exercise, on the supposition that the person towards whom it may be directed, needs either our benevolence or its effects. Happiness, its immediate object, is always and every where supremely delightful and desirable in itself; delightful, whenever it exists; desirable, whenever it may exist hereafter. The greater the degree in which it exists, or may exist hereafter, the more delightful, the more desirable, must it be of course. It is desirable that two persons should be happy, other things being equal, rather than one; twenty than two; a hundred than twenty. It is in a continually increasing proportion desirable, that a person should be twice as happy as he is at present, ten times, a hundred times. On the same grounds, it is delightful to find happiness existing in one degree, more delightful in two, and still more in twenty, or a hundred. To delight in happiness, in this manner, is in the same manner to exercise good-will towards the being who is thus happy.

The *happiness*, or *blessedness of God*, as it is more commonly termed, is no other than his *enjoyment* of his *own perfect attributes*, and of the *effects* produced by them in that glorious system of good which is begun in the work of creation, and will be completed in the work of providence: or, in other words, his *sufficiency for accomplishing*, the *certainty* that he will *accomplish*, and the *actual* accomplishment of a *perfect system of good*. This is an object infinitely desirable to the divine mind. Were it to fail, this desire

would be ungratified, and the divine mind would be proportionally unhappy.

To this it will be objected, as it often has been, that 'this doctrine makes God dependant for his happiness on his creatures.'

This objection is a mistake. The doctrine involves no such dependance. The independence of God consists not at all in the fact, that he will be happy, whether his designs will be accomplished, or not; but in his sufficiency for the absolute accomplishment of them all; and in the absolute certainty that they will be thus accomplished. His power, wisdom, and goodness are this sufficiency; and yield him intuitive certainty of this accomplishment. These things constitute the most perfect possible independence.

Were God without desires, had he no choice, no pleasure, he could enjoy no happiness. Were he unable to fulfil his pleasure, or uncertain whether it would be fulfilled, he would be dependant. But, according to this statement, his happiness and his independence are both absolute.

The designs of God are infinitely desirable, because they involve the display of his infinite perfections in their perfect exercise, and in the accomplishment of a perfect system of good. In this manner they present to us the most glorious of all objects, operating in the most glorious manner, to the production of the most glorious purpose. This object is, with the highest evidence, infinitely desirable and delightful. At the same time, the happiness which God enjoys in the exercise of his perfections, and in the accomplishment of this divine end, is a happiness not only infinitely desirable and delightful to himself, but desirable in the same manner to all intelligent creatures. All intelligent creatures possessed of real benevolence, cannot fail to rejoice that God is, and ever will be, thus infinitely happy, that these glorious designs will certainly be accomplished, that he will ever thus act, and that he will ever find infinite enjoyment in thus acting. It is truly desira

ble that God should be thus happy, as it is that any of his intelligent creatures should be happy; and as much more desirable as he is happier than they.

But to delight in this happiness, is to exercise towards God the benevolence of the gospel. I flatter myself, that to exercise this benevolence, has been amply proved to be an unquestionable and supreme duty of man.

2. *Love to God is complacency in his character.*

It has been shewn in several former Discourses, that God is infinitely benevolent; in other words, he is infinitely disposed to desire and perform that which is good in the highest degree. In other words, he is infinitely just, faithful, true, kind, bountiful, and merciful. Such a character is infinitely excellent in itself; and demands, in the highest possible degree, the supreme approbation, and the supreme complacency of every intelligent creature.

Benevolence, as here required, is a delight in the happiness of God: *Complacency* is a delight in his excellence. The excellence of God contains in itself all that wisdom can approve, all that virtue can love, all that is meant by the excellence and amiableness, by the beauty and glory, of mind; by moral dignity and greatness. This is what God himself esteems his own supreme perfection, and the transcendent glory of his character. Accordingly, when he proclaimed his name to Moses on Mount Sinai, he proclaimed this part of his character only; and styled it the *name*, or glory, of Jehovah.

I know not, that to love God, in this sense, has ever been denied or doubted to be a Christian duty by such as have believed in the Scriptures. On the contrary, it has been commonly supposed, that complacency and gratitude were the only love to God required in his law. The happiness of God has usually been considered as so secure, so independent, and so perfect, as that, while he needs nothing from the hands of his creatures to increase or ensure it, he also may be justly regarded as claiming nothing from them with respect to this subject. His

perfections, at the same time, are so manifest, and so absolute, as to fill the mind with reverence and amazement, and engross all its attention and thoughts. In this manner, probably, the regard of mankind, and even of wise and good men, has been so effectually drawn away from the consideration of the happiness of God, to the consideration of his excellence, that they seem chiefly to have forgotten the former of these objects, and have been almost wholly occupied by the latter. At the same time, it cannot be denied, that to delight in the excellence of God is a duty *more obvious* to the mind, than to delight in his happiness. A little reflection will, however, convince us, and I hope it has already been clearly shewn, that it is not a more *indispensable* duty. It is plainly not our original duty. It is plainly not virtue, or moral excellence, in the *original* sense. This is unquestionably, the *love of happiness*. Complacency is the *love of this virtue, or moral excellence*. But that excellence must exist, before it can be loved. The contrary supposition is a palpable absurdity; to which all those reduce themselves who insist that *complacency is original virtue*.

3. *The love of God is gratitude.*

Gratitude is love to God for the particular manifestations of his glorious character, in his various kindness to us, and to ours. We, and perhaps all other intelligent beings, are so formed, as to be able more clearly to see, and more strongly to feel, blessings immediately bestowed on ourselves, and on those intimately connected with us, whose characters and wants, whose sorrows and joys, we peculiarly understand and feel, than those bestowed on others. As we feel universally what is ours, and what pertains to our connexions, more (other things being equal) than what pertains to those whose interests we less understand, and in whose concerns we are less in the habit of mingling; so we feel, of course, more deeply, the blessings which we and they receive, the deliverances, hopes, comforts, joys, than we do, or can those of others. Our near connexions

are our second selves ; and there is sometimes a little difference, and sometimes even less, between us and them, in our views and feelings, than between them and others. Nay, there are cases in which we feel the interests of our connexions no less than our own. A parent would often willingly suffer the distresses of a child, in order to accomplish relief for him, and often rejoices more in his prosperity than if it were his own.

There is, perhaps, no solid reason in the nature of things, why God should be loved more for the manifestation of goodness towards one being, than for the same manifestation towards another. Still, with our present dispositions, those acts of his benevolence which respect ourselves, will always, perhaps, appear more amiable than those which respect others.

Gratitude, therefore, or love to God for the communications of blessings to ourselves, and to those in whose well-being we find a direct and peculiar interest, is an affection of the mind, in some respects distinct from complacency ; an affection which must, and ought, to exist in this world. As we can love God more for blessings thus bestowed, than for those bestowed on others ; so we ought to seize every occasion to exercise this love, to the utmost of our power ; and such occasions enable us to exercise it in a superior degree.

Possibly, in a future world, and a higher state of existence, all the blessings of God communicated to rational beings may affect us as if communicated to ourselves, and our complacency in his character may universally become possessed of the whole intense-ness and ardour of gratitude.

Gratitude, considered as a virtue, it is always to be remembered, is love excited by kindness communicated, or believed to be communicated with virtuous and good designs, and from good motives: not for kindness bestowed for base and selfish ends. In every case of this nature, the kindness professed is merely pretended and hypocritical. The bestower terminates all his views in his own advantage ; and

has no ultimate regard to the benefit of the receiver.

The kindness of God is invariably communicated with the best of all designs and motives, designs and motives infinitely good; and is therefore a display of a character infinitely excellent. Hence it is always to be regarded with gratitude. The good bestowed is also the highest good; and therefore the highest gratitude is due to the bestower.

Of precepts, requiring all these exercises of love, and prohibiting the want of them; of examples, by which they are gloriously illustrated; of motives, promises, and rewards, by which they are divinely encouraged; the Scriptures are full. Particularly, the *good-will* of the psalmist to the infinitely great and glorious Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor, of the universe, is manifested every where throughout his sacred songs. Every where he rejoices in the designs and actions of Jehovah; in the certain accomplishment of his designs; in the infinite glory which he will derive from them all; in the prosperity of his kingdom; and in the joy which he experiences in all the works of his hands.

Equally does he express his *complacency* in the perfect character of God; his wisdom, power, goodness, truth, faithfulness, and mercy, as displayed in his works and word, in his law and gospel.

Nor is he less abundant in his effusions of *gratitude* for all the divine goodness to himself and his family, to the people of Israel and the church of God. In expressing these emotions, he is ardent, intense, sublime, and rapturous; an illustrious example to all who have come after him of the manner in which we should feel, and in which we should express, our love to God.

Like him, the prophet Isaiah, the apostle Paul, and generally all the scriptural writers, in words not directly devotional, but doctrinal and preceptive, exhibit, with corresponding ardour and sublimity, these most excellent dispositions. It is hardly necessary to add, that our own emotions and expressions ought to be of the same general nature.

Having thus exhibited, summarily, the nature of love to God, in these three great exercises, I will now proceed to allege several reasons which demand of us these exercises of piety.

1. *This service is highly reasonable, beautiful, and amiable, in intelligent creatures.*

God, from the considerations mentioned in this Discourse, presents to us in his blessedness, in his excellence, and in his communications of good, all possible reasons, in all possible degrees, why we should exercise towards him our supreme benevolence, complacency, and gratitude. His enjoyment is the sum of all happiness; his character the sum of all perfection; and his communications of good the amount of all the blessings found in the universe. These united constitute an object assembling in itself, comparatively speaking, all natural and moral beauty, glory, and excellence; whatever can be desired, esteemed, or loved.

2. *God infinitely loves himself.*

The conduct of God is, in every case, the result of views and dispositions perfectly wise, and just, and good; and becomes, wherever they can imitate it, a perfect rule to direct the conduct of his intelligent creatures. In this case, the rule is as perfect as in any other; and in this case, as well as every other, it is the highest honour, and the consummate rectitude, of all intelligent creatures to resemble their Creator. So far as we resemble him, we are secure of being right, excellent, and lovely.

At the same time, so far as we are like him, we are assured of his approbation and love, and of receiving from his hands all the good which our real interests require. As he loves himself, he cannot but love his resemblance, wherever it is found.

3. *In this conduct we unite with all virtuous beings.*

This is the very conduct which especially constitutes them virtuous, and without which their virtue in every other sense, would cease to exist. For this they love and approve themselves; for this they will approve and love us. By these exercises of piety,

then, we become at once, entirely, and for ever, members of their glorious assembly ; secure of their esteem, friendship, and kind offices ; and entitled, of course, to a participation of their divine and immortal enjoyment. The best friends, the most delightful companions, the most honourable connexions which the universe contains, or will ever contain, are in this manner made throughout the ages of our endless being.

4. *We unite with God and the virtuous universe in voluntarily promoting that supreme good, which by his own perfections, and their instrumentality, he has begun to accomplish.*

This work is literally divine ; the supreme, the only display of divine excellence which ever has been, or ever will be, made ; an immense and eternal kingdom of virtue and happiness ; all that wisdom can approve, or virtue desire. To engage in it, is to engage in the best of all employments. To choose it, is to exhibit the best of all characters. It is to choose what God himself chooses, to pursue what he pursues, to act as he acts, and to be ‘ fellow-workers together with him’ in the glorious edifice of eternal good. The disposition required in this command is the same which in him, and in all his virtuous creatures, originated, advances, and will complete, this divine building in its ever-growing stability, beauty, and splendour.

5. *We secure and enjoy the greatest happiness.*

Love to God is a disposition inestimably sweet and delightful ; delightful in itself, delightful in its operations, delightful in its effects. All the exercises of it are in their own nature, and while they are passing, a series of exquisite enjoyments. They operate only to good ; and are, therefore, highly pleasurable in all their various tendency. Their effects, both within and without the soul, are either pure unmingled happiness directly enjoyed by ourselves, or a similar happiness first enjoyed by others, and then returning to ourselves with a doubly endeared and charming reversion.

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This disposition leads us unceasingly to contemplate the most exalted, wonderful, and delightful objects ; the things which God has already done, is daily accomplishing, and has disclosed to us in his promises as hereafter to be accomplished. Contemplation on the works of God, when they are regarded as being his works, is capable of furnishing us with dignified and intense enjoyment. To produce this effect, however, it is indispensable that we should view them under the influence of this disposition. The mind can experience no pleasure in contemplating the actions of a being whom it does not love. Love to God opens the gates of enjoyment ; and of all enjoyment, furnished by the works of creation and providence, so far as it springs from the consideration that they are *his* works. Through this enjoyment it conducts the mind to others ; and to others still, in a train which knows no end. Wherever we are, or can be delighted with displays of boundless wisdom and boundless goodness, with the perfect efforts of a perfect character, love to God is the guide which conducts us to the divine possession.

Beyond this, he who created us for this glorious purpose, and who delights to see it accomplished, cannot fail to be pleased with us, while engaged in it ; and, therefore, will not fail to reward us with his blessings. In this path, then, we ascend to the divine favour ; ' see the good of his chosen, enjoy the gladness of his nation ;' and share ' the glory of his inheritance.' Eternal glory, then, is the natural, the necessary result of love to God. Indeed, eternal glory is nothing but his eternal and unchangeable love to us, and our eternal and unchanging love to him ; united with the same love, extended, and reciprocated, among all virtuous beings. In the world to come, this divine disposition will become more and more sweet and delightful ; and in every mind be, in the beautiful language of our Saviour, ' a well of water, springing up unto everlasting life.'

6. Without love to God, there can be no virtue, or moral excellence.

Love is a single character ; uniform in its nature, and in no way separable, even in contemplation, except merely as it is exercised towards different objects. These give it all those which are considered as its different forms. In all these forms it is exercised by the same man, in exactly the same manner. If it be found in one of these forms in any mind, it is of course found in the same mind, in every other form, whenever the object which gives it that form is presented to that mind. Thus he, who possesses *benevolence*, when *happiness* is the object present to him, exercises *complacency* whenever he contemplates *moral excellence* ; and *gratitude*, whenever he turns his thoughts towards a *benefactor*. Thus, also, he who loves God, loves his fellow-creatures of course ; and, of course, governs himself with evangelical moderation and self denial. In all these exercises of the mind, and all others of a virtuous nature, a single, indivisible disposition exists and operates. This disposition is the love required by the divine law ; ‘ the love ’ which St. Paul declares to be ‘ the fulfilling of the law : ’ not love of various kinds ; not a train of dispositions, diversified in their nature, and springing up successively as new objects are presented to the mind : but love, of exactly the same nature, diversified only by being exercised towards different objects.

This disposition is the only real excellence of mind. There is no ultimate good but happiness ; and no disposition originally good, but that which rejoices in it, and voluntarily promotes it. Benevolence is therefore, the only original excellence of mind ; and is the foundation of all the real excellence of complacency and gratitude, which are only subordinate forms or exercises of the same character.

7. *A higher, nobler state of being is enjoyed by him who loves God, than can possibly be enjoyed by any other*

God is the origin and residence of all that is great or good in the universe. All other greatness and goodness are mere emanations from the greatness and goodness of Jehovah. To have no delight in

these glorious attributes, boundlessly existing in the infinite mind, is to be destitute of the noblest and best of all views and affections; of affections and views fitted in their own nature to improve, ennoble, refine, and enrapture the mind; and to form it into a most honourable resemblance to the sum of all perfection. Without this disposition, we are sinners, enemies to God, spots in his kingdom, and nuisances to the universe; are debased, guilty, and hateful here, and shall be endlessly guilty and miserable hereafter.

8. *In this manner we obey God.*

God, whose we are, and whom we are bound to serve, has been pleased to express his pleasure to the intelligent universe, in these two commands. He who published them is our Maker, our Preserver, and our Benefactor. We are his property, created by his hand, formed for his use, made for his glory. His right to dispose of us according to his pleasure, is therefore supreme, and such as cannot be questioned. It is a right of course which, although so exercised as to demand of us very great and long continued self-denial, is ever to be submissively, patiently, and cheerfully acknowledged by us. Whatever God is pleased to require us to do or to suffer, we are to do with delight, and suffer with absolute resignation. I do not mean that we can be required, either with justice or propriety, to do or to suffer any thing which is unjust or wrong. To require this of intelligent creatures, is literally impossible for a mind infinitely perfect. But I mean, that whatever this perfect and great Being actually requires, we are absolutely bound to do or suffer in this manner.

At the same time, it is a source of unceasing satisfaction and delight, to discern, *from the nature of the subject itself*, that all which is actually required, is *holy, just, and good*, supremely honourable to him, and supremely beneficial to his intelligent creatures. This, I flatter myself, has been sufficiently shewn in ~~this~~ and the preceding Discourses. It is delightful,

while we are employed in obeying God, to perceive immediately that our conduct is in all respects desirable ; the most desirable, the most amiable, the most delightful of all possible conduct ; in a word, the only conduct which really deserves these epithets.

Obedience to a parent possessed of peculiar wisdom and goodness is, to every dutiful child, delightful in itself ; not only when the thing required by him is in its own nature pleasing ; but also when it is indifferent, and even when it is difficult and painful. The pleasure enjoyed is in a great measure independent of that which is done ; and consists, primarily, in the delightful nature of those affections which are exercised in obeying, and in the satisfaction of pleasing him whom we obey, by the respect and love manifested in our obedience. The Parent of the universe is possessed of infinite wisdom and goodness. To please him, therefore, is supremely desirable and delightful. But the only conduct in which we can possibly please him, is our obedience ; and our only obedience is to ' love him with all the heart, and our neighbour as ourselves.'

Thus, whether we regard *ourselves*, and wish to be virtuous, excellent, honourable, and happy ; or whether we regard our *fellow-creatures*, and wish to render them happy, to unite with them in a pure and eternal friendship, to receive unceasingly their esteem and kind offices ; and to add our efforts to theirs for the promotion of the universal good : or whether we regard God ; and desire to obey, to please, and to glorify him ; to coincide voluntarily with the designs formed by his boundless wisdom and goodness ; and to advance with our own cordial exertions the divine and immortal ends, which he is accomplishing ; we shall make it our chief object to ' love the Lord our God with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and with all the understanding.'

SERMON XCIII.

THE LAW OF GOD.

THE FIRST AND GREAT COMMANDMENT.

REVERENCE OF GOD.

And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom ; and to depart from evil is understanding.—JOB xxviii. 28.

IN the last Discourse I examined the nature of love to God, as manifested in those three great exercises of it, which are commonly spoken of under the name: viz. *benevolence, complacency, and gratitude*. I shall now consider another exercise of this affection, of sufficient magnitude to claim a particular discussion in a System of Theology. This is *reverence* to the same glorious Being.

The context is an eulogium on wisdom, uttered in the noblest spirit of poetry. After describing, in a variety of particulars, the surprising effects of human ingenuity, and declaring that, extraordinary as these may seem, the ingenuity which has produced them is utterly insufficient to discover the nature of this glorious attainment, Job asserts its value to be greater than any, and than all the most precious things which this world contains. In this state of human insufficiency, he informs us, God was pleased to interfere, and by a direct revelation to declare to man, that ‘the fear of the Lord is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.’

By wisdom, throughout the Scriptures, in the common language of such men as understand the meaning of their own language, is universally intended that conduct, in which the *best means* are selected to accomplish the *best ends* ; or the *spirit* which chooses these ends, and selects these means for their accomplishment. In the *former* case, the name refers to the *conduct* only ; in the *latter*, to the *character*. The *best* of all ends which it is possible for intelligent

creatures to pursue, is the combined and perfectly coincident one of glorifying God, and promoting the good of the universe. The spirit with which this is done in the only effectual manner, is that which is here styled 'the fear of the Lord.' The means by which it is done, are partly the spirit itself, in its various exercises and operations; and partly extraneous means, devised and employed by the same spirit.

A subordinate, but still very important end, which is or ought to be proposed to himself by every intelligent creature, and for which the most efficacious means ought to be employed by him, is *his own eternal happiness*. 'The fear of the Lord is (equally) wisdom,' in this view; as being the only disposition which can either be happy in itself, or receive its proper reward from God.

Every person who has read the Scriptures in the Old Testament, must have observed that this phrase, 'the fear of the Lord,' and others substantially involving the same words, as well as the same meaning, are oftener used to denote the moral character which is acceptable to God, than any, perhaps than all, other phrases whatever. It must also have struck every such reader, that this phrase is often used to denote all moral excellence; particularly, that supreme branch of this excellence which is denominated *piety*. This is plainly the drift of the text, and of many other corresponding passages of Scripture. Thus it is said, 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning,' or the chief part, of 'wisdom,' Psalm cxi. 10. 'The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life,' Prov. xiv. 27. 'The fear of the Lord is his treasure,' Isa. xxxiii. 6. In these, and a multitude of other declarations of a similar import, it is plainly indicated, that 'the fear of the Lord' is the sum and substance of that morally excellent character, which is the object of the divine complacency.

It must, at the same time, be equally obvious to every attentive reader of the Bible, that *love to God* has there exactly the same character; being, in the language of St. Paul, 'the fulfilling of the law;' and

in that of St. John, the same thing as 'being born of God, and 'knowing God;' in the sense in which such knowledge is declared by our Saviour to be 'life eternal.'

But there are not *two distinct* moral characters, severally thus excellent; thus the objects of the divine complacency, and the foundations of eternal life. Moral excellence is *one* thing; and moral beings have but *one* character which recommends them to God. As this is thus differently spoken of under the names of *the love of God*, and *the fear of God*, both in the Old and New Testament; it is sufficiently evident to a mind, even slightly attentive, that the *fear of God*, and the *love of God*, are but one character, appearing under different modifications. Accordingly, saints, or holy persons, are spoken of sometimes as those who fear God, and sometimes as those who love God: each of these exercises being considered as involving the other; and both as parts only of one character.

That this view of the subject is perfectly just, is easily explained by a consideration of its nature. There are two totally distinct exercises, which in the Scriptures, as well as in common language, are denoted by *fearing God*, which may be called *dread* and *reverence*. The former of these emotions is that which is experienced by men, conscious of their guilt, feeling that they have merited the anger of God, and realizing the danger of suffering from his hand and the punishment of their sins. In this it is plain, that there can be no moral excellence. All that can be said in favour of it is, that it may serve as a check to sin; and prove, among other means, useful to bring sinners to repentance. In itself it is mere terror; and, in the language of the Scriptures only makes us 'subject to bondage.' The latter of these emotions is a compound of fear and love usually styled *reverence*; and is often that exercise of the mind, in which its whole attachment is exerted towards God. Fear, in this sense, is a strong apprehension of the greatness, and the purity of God, ex-

cited in the mind of a person who loves him supremely. A lively example of a similar emotion is presented to us by the reverence with which a dutiful child regards a highly respected earthly parent. Accordingly, the fear of God, in this sense, is commonly styled *filial*; in the former sense, it is often termed *servile*, or *slavish*; as being of the same nature with the dread which a mercenary servant stands in of an imperious master.

It is perfectly evident, that the distinction between these two emotions is founded entirely on the character of those by whom they are severally exercised. Reverence to God is experienced only by those who love him; and is plainly the fear exercised by an affectionate mind only. Were love the only character of the mind, dread could not possibly find a place in it. 'There is no fear in love,' says St. John, 'but perfect love casteth out fear. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.' As Christians in this world are not made perfect in love, the fear spoken of in this passage, viz. that which I have called *dread*, is, in greater or less degrees, experienced by them. Wicked men are incapable of reverencing God, and only feel a dread of his anger and of punishment.

The reverence, which is the immediate subject of consideration, ordinarily exists in the mind of a good man whenever his contemplations are turned towards the Creator, or towards those objects which are peculiarly his, and in which he is peculiarly seen. It is a *steady, solemn, and delightful awe*, excited in the mind by every view which it takes of the perfections and operations of this great and glorious Being. In our contemplations on his character, he himself becomes *immediately* the object of our thoughts. In all other cases we see him through the medium of his works, his word, or his ordinances. In all these, and in these alone, are we able to discern his real character. In all these we behold him awfully great, and wise, and good. In his works, we are witnesses of that boundless benevolence which chose, that boundless knowledge which contrived,

and that boundless power, which produced their existence; all of them seen daily, in every place, and in every object. It is impossible for the mind which is not totally destitute of piety, to behold the sublime, the awful, the amazing, works of creation and providence; the heavens with their luminaries, the mountains, the ocean, the storm, the earthquake, and the volcano; the circuit of the seasons, and the revolutions of empires; without marking in them all the mighty hand of God, and feeling strong emotions of reverence towards the Author of these stupendous works. At some of them all men tremble: at others all men are astonished. But the sanctified mind, while it is affected in the same manner, blends its fear with love, and mingles delight even with its apprehensions; is serene amid the convulsions which only terrify others; and encouraged, while all around are overwhelmed with dismay.

In the word of God, these attributes are, in some respects, exhibited in a still more affecting manner. Here, the designs of this awful Being are unfolded, and his works presented to us, as a vast system of means, operating in a perfect manzer to the production of the most divine and glorious ends. Here, the pure and perfect rectitude of the Creator, his unlimited wisdom, and overflowing goodness, are still more divinely manifested in the law by which he governs the universe, and in the scheme of restoring mankind to holiness by the redemption of his Son, disclosed to us in the gospel. The boundless nature of these things invests them with a magnificence and sublimity, wonderfully increasing the reverence excited by the things themselves; but nothing seems to me more fitted to awaken this emotion than a sense of that spotless purity, in the view of which 'the heavens are unclean, and the angels chargeable with folly.' In this solemn contemplation of this awfully amiable attribute, it seems difficult to forbear exclaiming, 'What is man, who drinketh iniquity like water!' The same emotion, mingled with stronger feelings of alarm, is produced also by a con-

templation of those amazing events, which are proclaimed by the voice of prophecy concerning the future destination of man ; the conflagration, the judgment, and the retributions of the righteous and the wicked.

In the *ordinances of religion* the very same things are presented to the view of the mind, which so deeply affect it in the works, and especially in the word of God, and are presented to us in a manner peculiarly interesting. Here, we in a peculiar manner draw nigh to God, and apply to ourselves with unrivalled force the great, the awful, and the glorious things which excite our reverence. They are, of course, all seen in the clearest light, and felt with the deepest impression. Our reverence, therefore, is apt to be here felt in a peculiar degree ; not a little enhanced by the sympathy exercised by multitudes feeling the same impression.

No affection of the mind is more useful than this ; especially when it has become so invigorated by habit, as to mingle itself with all our thoughts and feelings. It cannot but be advantageous to mention particularly, some of the happy consequences which it regularly produces. As a preface to this subject it will, however, be proper to observe generally, that habitual reverence to God may be justly regarded as being peculiarly the spirit with which his commandments are scrupulously and faithfully obeyed. ‘Fear God,’ saith Solomon, ‘and keep his commandments : for this is the whole duty of man :’ or, in the better language of Hodgson’s version, ‘this is all that concerneth man.’ Here we have presented to us the two great parts of human duty ; our active obedience, and the spirit with which we obey. This spirit is announced by him to be reverence. He does not say, ‘Love God, and keep his commandments ;’ but gives this all-comprehensive injunction in what seems to me very evidently better language. If we suppose ourselves to love God, without fearing him, I have no hesitation in saying, we should not keep his commandments, while possessed

present imperfection, either to such an extent, or with such exactness, as we now do when under the government of evangelical reverence. Reverence adds new motives of obedience to those which are presented by love considered by itself; motives pre-eminently powerful and extensive, reaching the heart immediately, and extending to all persons, occasions, and times. Hence, it becomes a most powerful prompter to universal obedience; and, although love is the disposition which renders this emotion excellent; and although the emotion itself is only one modification of love, yet, in my own view, and if I mistake not in the view of the Scriptures also, it is, at least in such beings as men are, a more energetic principle than mere love existing, as it actually does exist, in human minds. Hence, after so much solemn preparation in the context, God declares in the text, 'The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom.' Hence St. Paul says to the Corinthians, 'Having, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh, and of the spirit; perfecting holiness in the fear of God.' In this passage it is evident that, in the view of St. Paul, the *fear* of God is the primary means of advancing personal holiness to perfection. It is in this view, also, that the prophet Isaiah declares 'the *fear* of the Lord to be his treasure;' the attribute which in man he especially prizes, and in which he peculiarly delights.

These observations concerning the general influence of this attribute are sufficient for the present purpose. I shall now, therefore, proceed to mention its particular influence on the Christian life.

1. *Religious reverence has a peculiar tendency to render our worship acceptable to God.*

'Wherefore,' says St. Paul, 'we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve him acceptably, with reverence and godly fear.' In this passage the grace of God is exhibited to us as the cause which enables us to worship God acceptably; and reverence and

godly fear, two names for the same disposition, as the spirit with which acceptable worship is performed. 'By this spirit,' says Dr. Owen, 'the soul is moved and excited to spiritual care and diligence, not to provoke so great, so holy, and so jealous a God, by a neglect of that exercise of grace he requires in his service, which is due to him on account of his glorious excellences.'

In accordance with this representation of the apostle, the psalmist says, Psalm v. 7, 'As for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy; and in thy *fear* will I worship towards thy holy temple.' Our Saviour also, speaking in Psalm xxii. says, 'Ye that *fear* the Lord, praise him; all ye seed of Jacob glorify him; and *fear* him all ye seed of Israel.' In the former of these passages, the psalmist, under the influence of inspiration, teaches us that the fear of God is pre-eminently the spirit with which he would choose to perform his worship in the temple; and the spirit of course which he knew would render that worship acceptable to God. In the latter of these passages, our Saviour mentions those who fear God, as the proper persons to be employed in his praise; and teaches us, therefore, that this is the spirit with which alone men are becomingly occupied in this solemn and delightful act of worship. At the close of the verse, he exhibits those who fear God as the persons who glorify him.

A prime part of the character given of Job is, that '*he feared God.*' Perhaps this may be alleged as the true reason why his prayers for his three friends were accepted on their behalf; for we find him immediately before humbling himself in the presence of God with expressions of the most profound reverence. Cornelius also seems to have had his prayers, as well as his alms, accepted, because he *feared God.* A much stronger instance than these, the strongest indeed which can be supposed, is given us in Heb. v. 7, where it is said of Christ, 'Who, in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and

tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he *feared*.' If this translation of the passage be admitted, as the natural meaning of the words requires, and as, notwithstanding the opinion of several commentators, seems reasonable; we are here taught, that even Christ himself, on the great occasion referred to, was heard on account of the reverence with which his supplications were presented. Perhaps, this extraordinary declaration was made especially to teach us, that without religious reverence no prayer can be accepted of God; and thus to render us peculiarly careful not to approach the throne of grace without emotions in a high degree reverential.

I will only add to these observations from the Scriptures, that a great part of the worship transcribed in them from the mouths of pious men, consists in reverential sentiments and expressions.

What the Scriptures thus teach, is perfectly accordant with the dictates of our reason. No views, no emotions in us can be supposed to become the worship of God, which are not either directly reverential, or such as flow from a generally reverential state of mind. If we remember how great a being God is; that he is self-existent and independent; that he is almighty and omnipresent; that 'he searches the hearts, and tries the reins; that he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and cannot look upon sinners but with abhorrence;' if we think at the same time, how dependant we are upon him, how little we are, how guilty, how exposed to his anger, how imperfect in our best services, and how undeserving of any acceptance; if we remember, that 'he is,' and that 'there is none beside him;' and that not only we, but 'all nations, are as nothing before him;' that he is 'glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, and transcendently awful in his purity; it cannot be possible for us to avoid feeling, that no thoughts, affections, or conduct can become those who worship him, but such as are accompanied by solemn awe, and profound reverence for him.

perfect character : that, as ' his name is Holy and Reverend,' so his worship should ever be celebrated with ' godly fear.'

2. *Religious reverence is peculiarly the means of exciting, and keeping alive, an abhorrence of sin.*

' The fear of the Lord,' says Solomon, or rather Christ speaking by Solomon, ' is to hate evil,' Prov. viii. 13; that is, it is a part of the very nature of religious reverence to hate evil. ' The transgression of the wicked saith in my heart, there is no fear of God before his eyes.' In this passage the psalmist declares, that ' the transgression of the wicked' proved to his satisfaction, that there was ' no fear of God before his eyes.' Why? Plainly, because the wicked, if he feared God, would cease to transgress. Of Job it is said, he ' feared God, and eschewed evil.' In this passage we are directly taught, that he eschewed evil because he feared God. After God appeared to him with awful glory and majesty, his views of the hatefulness and vileness of his sins, were exceedingly enhanced by the clear apprehensions which he entertained of the supreme greatness and excellency of his Maker. His reverential awe of God on the one hand, and his abhorrence of himself and his sins on the other, are very forcibly exhibited in his own language. ' Behold, I am vile! What shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.'

It hardly needs to be observed, that nothing can impress on our minds the odiousness of sin in such a manner, as clear and affecting views of the purity of Jehovah, and the reverence for him with which these views are attended; or, in better language, of which these views constitute an essential part. So entirely are mankind, at least those of them who speak our language, sensible of this, that in judicial processes against criminals, the law constantly assigns as a primary cause of their commission of crimes, that they ' had not the fear of God before

their eyes' This is the strongest of all human testimony, that the fear of God is the great and controlling cause of hating and abstaining from iniquity. Of course,

3. *Religious reverence is the great source of reformation.*

'The fear of the Lord,' says Solomon, 'is to hate evil,' Prov. viii. 13. In this declaration we are taught, that reverence of God is so extensively the cause of departing from evil, that it was proper, in the view of the Spirit of God, to declare it to be the same thing with 'departure from evil.' Substantially in the same manner is this truth exhibited in the text; where 'the fear of the Lord' is declared to be 'wisdom, and departure from evil, understanding.' By *wisdom* and *understanding* here, it is scarcely necessary to say, the same thing is intended; and this, in the former part of the verse, is declared to be 'the fear of the Lord;' and, in the latter, 'departure from evil.' 'Fear the Lord,' says Solomon to his son, Prov. iii. 7, 'and depart from evil.' And again, Prov. xiv. 27, 'The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.' And again, in language somewhat different, Prov. xiii. 14, 'The law of the wise is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.' Here religious reverence, styled in the former passage 'the fear of the Lord,' and in the latter 'the law of the wise,' is declared to be 'a fountain of life,' sending forth unceasing streams, of which he who drinks will be both enabled and inclined 'to depart from the snares of death;' that is, from sins which are fatal snares to all who practise them.

But to depart from evil is, necessarily, to do good. Moral beings are, by their nature, always employed in obedience or disobedience. He, therefore, who 'ceases to do evil,' invariably 'learns to do well;' is invariably employed in the great business of reforming his life, and endeavouring to glorify his Creator.

4. *Religious reverence is peculiarly the source of*

rectitude in our dispositions and conduct towards mankind.

‘There was,’ saith our Saviour, ‘in a certain city, a judge, who neither feared God, nor regarded man.’ This account of the subject is metaphysically and universally just. He who does not fear God, will not regard man, in any such manner as reason acknowledges to consist with moral rectitude, and as all men declare to be due from man to man. He may indeed, like the unjust judge in this parable, for the sake of freeing himself from importunity and trouble, for the sake of reputation, convenience, gain, or some other selfish object, act with propriety in his external conduct; but he will never possess any real rectitude, and cannot, therefore, act under its influence.

When Jehoshaphat set judges in the land, he said unto them, ‘Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the Lord, who is with you in the judgment. Wherefore now, let the fear of the Lord be upon you; take heed, and do it: for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts.’ These are obviously the best rules ever given to judicial officers for the direction of their moral conduct; and such judges and such rulers as have accorded with them have undoubtedly been the best, when prejudice has not operated in a peculiar manner, which the world has ever seen. In all these, the fear of God was the controlling principle. Concerning those rulers whose conduct is recorded in the Scriptures, the subject does not admit of a doubt; for the divine writers have marked each case so strongly, as to put it wholly out of question. Concerning such men as Moses, Samuel, Josiah, and Nehemiah, no man is at a loss. There is as little uncertainty concerning Alfred the Great, Sir Matthew Hale, and many others in later times. All these, and all other men of a similar character, were supremely controlled in their conduct by the fear of God; the great thing insisted on by Jehoshaphat in these directions.

Nehemiah particularly informs us concerning this subject, as it respected himself. 'The former governors,' says he, 'who have been before me, were chargeable unto the people, and had taken of them bread and wine, besides forty shekels; yea, even their servants bare rule over the people; but so did not I, because of the fear of God.'

Of Hananiah, the ruler of the palace, this eminently worthy man says, chapter vii. 2, that he 'gave him charge over Jerusalem, because he was a faithful man, and feared God above many.' Of Cornelius it is said, 'he feared God, and gave much alms to the people.' Of Obadiab, the governor of Ahab's house, it is declared, that 'he feared the Lord greatly;' and that he had thus feared him 'from his youth.' As a proof, as well as consequence, of this spirit, we are informed, that, when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the Lord, he took a hundred and fifty of them, and hid them in caves, where he kept, and fed them, at the daily hazard of his life. By St. Paul, religious reverence is alleged as the ground and directory of Christian submission to lawful authority, Eph. v. 21; and by Malachi, chapter iii. 16, as the cause of Christian fellowship.

Thus we find this spirit extending its benign influence to the various branches of Christian duty; and proving a peculiarly efficacious cause of zeal and exemplariness, in all those parts of a religious life which contribute immediately to the well-being of our fellow-men.

5. Religious reverence is the foundation of peculiar blessings in the present world.

'The secret of the Lord,' says the psalmist, 'is with them that fear him,' Psalm xxv. 14. 'He hath given meat to them that fear him,' Psalm cxi. 5. 'There is no want to them that fear him,' Psalm xxxiv. 9. 'By the fear of the Lord are riches and honour,' Prov. xxii. 4. 'The angel of the Lord encampeth about them that fear him,' Psalm xxxiv. 7. 'He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him,' Psalm cxlv. 19. These promises, and these decla-

rations, furnish complete security to those who fear God, that they shall really 'want no good thing:' that their circumstances shall be so ordered, as that 'all things shall work together for their good.' They may indeed be troubled, and persecuted, and even cut off by a violent death. But these evils will take place only when they become necessary; and when they themselves, as well as others, will become more happy in the end by means of them, than they could be without them. Ordinarily, they will find, in times both of adversity and prosperity, ways, and those very numerous, in which God will shew himself more attentive to their real good than they themselves were; and, even in this life, will often see that the most untoward events, as they seemed while passing, are such as they themselves, while taking a retrospective view, would choose to have had befall them. At the same time, all their enjoyments are *blessings*; and not, like those of the wicked, *enjoyments merely*. At the same time also, while the sufferings of the wicked are punishments and curses, the afflictions of such as fear God are only blessings in disguise.

6. *Religious reverence is especially the means of securing eternal life.*

'Surely,' saith the psalmist, 'his salvation is nigh to them that fear him,' Psal. lxxxv. 9. 'I know,' saith Solomon, 'it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him. But it shall not be well with the wicked, because he feareth not before God,' Eccles. viii. 12, 13. And again; 'The fear of the Lord tendeth to life,' Prov. xix. 23. And again; 'The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life:' and, to sum up all in a single declaration, the wicked are declared by Christ, in the character of Wisdom, Prov. i. 29, to be finally given over to destruction, 'because they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord.' But it is unnecessary to spend time any farther, in illustrating a doctrine which necessarily follows from the observations made under the preceding heads.

REMARKS.

From these observations Christians are taught,

1. *The supreme importance of the fear of God.*

This affection is indispensable to the acceptableness of their worship, and their obedience; to their hatred of sin; their safety in temptation; and the amendment of their lives. It is a primary ingredient of their piety. It is the well-spring of their benevolence, justice, faithfulness, and brotherly love; of rectitude in them, when rulers; of submission, good order, and public spirit, when subjects. It is indispensable to their enjoyment of the favour of God in this life, and his everlasting kindness in the life to come. Higher motives to the attainment of any character cannot be alleged. Let every Christian, then, cherish and cultivate religious reverence in his own mind. Let him often, and habitually, bring before his eyes the awful Being, who is the only object of this affection, and whose sole prerogative it is to demand it of his creatures. Let him fasten his views on the presence and greatness, the purity and glory, of Jehovah; and solemnly discern, and confess, that he himself 'is nothing, less than nothing, and vanity.' In the incommunicable splendour, in the incomprehensible majesty, of the uncreated mind, all created glory is lost and forgotten. In the presence of the Sun of righteousness every star hides its diminished head. Before his beams the lustre of angels and archangels fades into nothing. In the presence of his purity the heavens' themselves, spotless as they are to a created eye, 'are unclean.'—'What then is man, that God should be mindful of him; or the son of man, that he should visit him?' What indeed are we—what indeed must we be—in the presence of such a being as this?

Such thoughts as these ought ever to be present in the mind. Whenever it turns its views towards the Creator, those views ought, from motives of interest and duty alike, to be invariably of the most

reverential kind. They most become the character of God ; are eminently pleasing in his sight ; constitute the best and happiest frame of mind ; and most advantageously influence us in all our duty.

2. *From these observations it is clear, that habitual reverence to God is one of the best evidences of piety.*

After what has been said, this truth needs no farther illustration. All that it is necessary to add is, that we are bound to examine ourselves accordingly.

3. *As reverence to God is the most profitable, so irreverence is the most dangerous, habit which can easily be conceived.*

As I shall have occasion to dwell particularly on this subject, when I come to consider the third command in the decalogue, I shall not dwell upon it here. It is sufficient to observe at the present time, that every person who is the subject of this character, ought to tremble at the danger to which he is daily exposing himself. There is no manner in which he can more effectually harden his own heart, or provoke the anger of God.

4. *He who does not reverence God habitually, is here taught, that he is wholly destitute of religion.*

There is a state of mind, in such persons especially as have been taught to fear God from the morning of life, and have retained a strong influence of these impressions, which it is often difficult to distinguish from evangelical reverence. But there is also a state of mind very extensively existing, which is wholly destitute of this attribute, and which, if examined with an ordinary degree of honesty and candour, may be easily discerned. No infidel, no profane person, no mere sensualist, or worldling, needs to hesitate for a moment in determining that he is destitute of reverence to God, and consequently of religion. Of course, he ought to regard himself as plainly an object of divine wrath ; and, so far as he has hitherto lived, an acknowledged heir of perdition. 'The fear of God is a fountain of life.' Irreverence to him is a well-spring of ever-

lasting death. Let every irreverent man remember, therefore, that, to such as he is, 'God is a consuming fire.'

I have dwelt more minutely and extensively on this great subject of religion, because of its inherent importance, and because it is, I think unhappily, a rare topic of discussion from the desk.

SERMON XCIV.

THE LAW OF GOD.

THE FIRST AND GREAT COMMANDMENT.

HUMILITY.

Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.—1 PET. v. 5.

IN the preceding Discourse I considered at some length that exercise of love to God which is styled *reverence*. I will now proceed to examine the kindred virtue of *humility*, an attribute which seems to differ from reverence, not so much in its nature, as in its object. God is the object of reverence; ourselves, of humility. The state of the mind in the exercise of these Christian graces seems to be the same. It is hardly possible that he who is now employed in reverencing his Maker, when casting his eye towards himself, should fail of being deeply humbled by a view of his own circumstances and character.

Before I enter upon this examination, however, it will be proper to observe, that there are other modes in which love to God is exerted; and which, although not demanding a particular discussion here, are yet of high importance, and well deserve to be mentioned. They deserve to be mentioned because of their importance. The reasons why they do not

claim a particular discussion are, that more time would be demanded by it than can well be spared from the examination of such subjects as require a more minute attention, and that they may be sufficiently understood from the observations made on the other exercises of piety.

Among these, the first place is naturally due to *admiration*. By this I mean the train of emotions excited in a good mind by the wonderful nature of the various works of God, and the amazing power, and skill, and goodness, which they unfold. 'God,' saith Eliphaz, Job v. 9, 'doeth great things and unsearchable; marvellous things without number.' These things, we find good men, distinguished in the Scriptures for their piety, observing and commemorating with a transport of admiration. 'O sing unto the Lord,' says David, 'for he hath done marvellous things.'—'I will shew forth all thy marvellous works.'—'Surely I will remember thy wonders of old.'—'How great are his signs,' says Nebuchadnezzar, speaking at least the language of a good man, 'how mighty are his wonders!' What they felt they called upon others to feel. 'Remember,' says David, 'his marvellous works that he hath done; his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth, 1 Chron. xvi. 12.—'Declare his glory among the heathen; his wonders among the people,' Psal. xcvi. 3. 'Oh give thanks to the Lord of lords, who alone doeth great wonders; for his mercy endureth for ever.

Admiration is a combined exercise of the mind; and is formed of *wonder* and *complacency*. It is an exercise eminently delightful, and is every where presented with objects to awaken it. Both creation and providence are full of wonders, presented to us at every moment, and at every step. Every attribute of God is fitted to excite this emotion by the amazing degree in which it exists; and by the degree also in which it is very often displayed. Thus the psalmist speaks of the 'marvellous loving kindness of God;' St. Peter, of his 'marvellous light.' King Darius says, 'He worketh signs and wonders in heaven and

earth.' Thus David says, 'I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.' Thus one of the names of Christ, whose redemption is the most marvellous of all the works of God, is, 'Wonderful.'

It is to be observed, that *religious admiration* is entirely distinguished from *wonder* in the ordinary sense, by its union with *complacency*. Ordinary wonder is delightful, but is totally destitute of moral excellence. Religious wonder is still more delightful, and may be excellent in any degree.

Secondly: *Dependance* is also an exercise of the same spirit.

That we are all dependant on God, is known to every person possessed of reason; and that we are absolutely dependant on him for every thing which we enjoy, or which we need. A *willingness* to be thus dependant, a *complacency* in this state of things as appointed by God, accompanied with that humble frame of mind necessarily attendant upon these affections, constitute what is called *religious dependance*; a state of mind exactly suited to our condition, and eminently useful to our whole Christian character and life.

To these may be added *faith*, *hope*, and *joy*, which have already been subjects of discussion; and to these, *submission*, which will be made the theme of a future Discourse.

The text contains a command, addressed to all those to whom St. Peter wrote, requiring that they should be clothed with humility; and enforces the precept by this combined reason, that 'God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.' No precept of revelation has been more disrelished by infidels than this. Hume attacks it in form, and considers the disposition enjoined as both vicious and contemptible. Still it is largely insisted on in the Scriptures, and is required of us unconditionally and indispensably. It is declared to precede all real honour, and thus to be necessary even to its existence. It is pronounced to have been an important attribute in the character of Christ himself.

'Learn of me,' says the Saviour of mankind, 'for I am meek and lowly of heart.' In the text itself it is plainly asserted to be an object of divine favour in such a sense, that the grace or free love of God is communicated to those who are humble, and denied to those who are not. In the Scriptural scheme, therefore, humility is invested with an importance which cannot be measured.

It must indeed be confessed, that nothing is more unaccordant with the native disposition of mankind. Pride, the first sin of our common parents, has characterized all their posterity. It is not, therefore, to be wondered at, that humility should be disesteemed and calumniated. If it 'were of the world, the world would (undoubtedly) love his own; but because it is not of the world, therefore the world hateth it.'

Of this attribute of the human mind, as it is exhibited in the Scriptures, I observe,

1. *It involves, in its nature, a just sense of our character and condition.*

We were born yesterday of the dust, and to-morrow return to the dust again. In our origin, and in our end, there is certainly little to awaken our pride. In both, we are closely allied to the beasts that perish; and may, with the strictest propriety, 'say to corruption, Thou art our farther; and to the worm, Thou art our mother and our sister.' How strange is it, that a being should be proud, who is going to the grave; who in a few days will lie down in the dust, to become a feast of worms, and to be changed into a mass of earth! Such, however, will speedily be the lot of the haughtiest monarch, the most renowned hero, and the proudest philosopher, who now says in his heart, 'I will ascend up to heaven, I will be like the Most High.'

During this little period, we are *dependant* creatures. Nothing is more coveted, nothing more eagerly sought, nothing boasted of with more complacency, by the children of pride, than *independence*. But the boast is groundless and the opinion which gives birth to it false. 'What hast thou,' says St

Paul, 'which thou hast not received?' From God we derive 'life, and breath, and all things.' All of them are mere gifts of his bounty, and to the least of them we cannot make a single claim. To his sovereign pleasure, also, are we every moment indebted for their continuance. 'That which he gives, we gather. He opens his hand, and we are filled with good. He takes away our breath; we die, and return to dust.'

But we are not dependant on God only. To a vast extent we are necessarily indebted for a great body of our enjoyments to our fellow-men. We can have neither food nor raiment; we can neither walk nor ride; we can have neither sleep nor medicine, we can neither enjoy ourselves, nor be useful to others, without the aid of multitudes of our fellow-men. Especially is the proud man thus dependant. Life to him is only a scene of suffering, unless he is continually regaled by the real or imagined respect of those around him. Homage is the food on which he lives, and applause the atmosphere in which alone he is able to breathe.

Among those on whom we are thus dependant, sometimes for life itself, and always for its comforts, are to be regularly numbered the poor, whom we are so prone to despise; nay, the slaves, whom we regard as having been created merely as instruments of our pleasure. To what a lowly condition is a haughty man thus reduced, and how different his actual situation from that which his conversation and demeanour would induce us to imagine.

Nor is our situation less *precarious* than it is dependant. The possessions, the comforts, the hopes, which we enjoy to-day, may all to-morrow vanish for ever. Our 'riches may make to themselves wings as an eagle, and fly away towards heaven.' Our health may be wrested from us by disease, and our comfort by pain. We may become decrepit, deaf, or blind. Our friends and families may bid us the last adieu, and retire to the world of spirits. Nay, ourselves and our pride may be buried together in

the grave. What foundation does such a state of existence furnish on which to build our pride?

We are also *ignorant*. Much, indeed, is said of our learning and science. It would be well if more could be said, and said with truth, concerning our wisdom. With all our boasts, how little do we know. How many objects are presented to us every day, of which we know nothing except their existence! How many questions do even little children ask, which no philosopher is able to answer! How many subjects of investigation say to every inquirer, 'Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther.'

Every thing which we know brings up to our view the many more which we cannot know; and thus daily forces upon us, if we will open our eyes, irresistible conviction of the narrowness of those limits by which our utmost researches are bounded, of the infantile nature of our actual attainments, of the smallness of those which are possible.

Among the subjects which display this ignorance in the strongest degree, those of a moral nature, those which immediately concern our duty and salvation, infinitely more important to us than any others, hold the primary place. What man is able to find out of himself concerning these we know, by what he has actually found out. Cast your eyes over this great globe, and over the past ages of time, and mark the nature of the religious systems invented by man. How childish, how senseless, how self-contradictory have been the opinions; how infatuated, how sottish, the precepts by which they have professedly regulated the moral conduct of men; how debased, how full of turpitude, how fraught with frenzy, the religious services by which they have laboured to propitiate their gods, and obtain a future happy existence; nay, what mere creatures of Bedlam were the gods themselves, and their delirious worshippers!

But for the Scriptures, we should now have the same views which have been spread over the whole heathen world; and might this day have been prostrating ourselves before stocks and stones, and look-

ing to drunkenness, prostitution, and the butchery of human victims, as the means of obtaining a happy immortality. How inexpressibly deplorable is this ignorance! How humble the character of those of whom it can be truly predicated!

For our exception from all these errors, we are indebted solely to the Bible. But, with this invaluable book in our hands, we reluctantly admit, in many cases, even its fundamental truths; truths of supreme importance to the establishment of virtue in our minds, and to the acquisition of eternal life beyond the grave; truths which are the glory of the revealed system, and which have been the means of conducting to heaven 'a multitude which no man can number.' In the place of these, what absurdities have not been imbibed!—absurdities immeasurably disgraceful to the understanding, and absolutely ruinous to the soul. How long these absurdities have reigned! How widely they have spread! What innumerable mischiefs they have done! How strongly they discover a violent tendency in our nature to reject truth and welcome error! Who, with this picture before him, can doubt that on this account we have abundant reason for humility?

In addition to these things, we are *sinful creatures*. 'The heart,' says the prophet Jeremiah, 'is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.' He who reads the three first chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, or peruses the history of mankind, or attentively considers the conduct of himself and his fellow-men, will, without much hesitation, adopt the decision of the prophet. It is wonderful that sinful beings should be proud of their character; and remarkable that pride is indulged by no other beings. Of what shall we be proud? In our conversation, and in our writings, we charge each other endlessly with impiety, profaneness, perjury, irreligion, injustice, fraud, falsehood, slander, oppression, cruelty, theft, lewdness, sloth, gluttony, and drunkenness. The charges are either true or false. If they are false, they are in themselves abominable wickedness.

If they are true, those on whom they rest are abominably wicked. What an unhappy foundation is here furnished for pride!

If we look into our own hearts, and into our own lives, and perform this duty faithfully, we shall find ample reason for self-condemnation; we shall see that our own hearts, at least, answer to the declaration of Jeremiah; we shall see ourselves alienated from God, revolted from his government, opposed to his law, ungrateful for his blessings, distrustful of his sincerity, and discontented with his administrations. With all these sins before us, we shall find ourselves slow of heart to believe or repent.

God has provided for us, and proffered to us, deliverance from our sins, and from the punishment which they have merited. He has sent a Saviour into the world to redeem us from under the curse of the law, and that by the effusion of his own blood; but we reject him. He has sent his Spirit to sanctify us, and to make us his children; but we resist his influence. He has offered to be reconciled to us; but we refuse to be reconciled to him. We might be virtuous, we might be happy; but we will not. What causes for humiliation are here presented to our view!

Finally: We are *miserable* creatures. In the present world we are, to a great extent unhappy. Cold and heat, hunger and thirst, anxiety, disappointment, toil, poverty, loss of friends, disgrace, sorrow, pain, disease, and death, divide among them a great part of our days, and leave us scarcely more than a few transient gleams of ease, comfort, and hope. How often are most of these evils doubled and tripled by similar sufferings of such as are dear to us in the bonds of nature and affection! How truly does Job declare, that 'man, who is born of a woman, is of few days, and full of trouble!'

From these calamities our only way of escape conducts us to the grave. Beyond that dreary mansion stands the last tribunal, at which our eternal doom will be irreversibly fixed. But the only re-

ward of sin is perdition, perdition final and irremediable. This is the deplorable end of the sins and miseries which so extensively constitute our character and our allotments in the present world.

Look now at the description which has been given, and tell me for which of these things we shall be proud. Is it our origin, our dependance, the precariousness of our life and its enjoyments, our ignorance, our errors, our sins, or our miseries?

In the mean time, let it be remembered, that this very pride is one of our grossest sins; whether it be pride of birth, of wealth, of beauty, of talents, of accomplishments, of exploits, of place, of power, or of moral character. 'A proud look,' from whatsoever source derived, 'is an abomination to the Lord. Angels by their pride lost heaven. Our first parents by their pride ruined the world.

That the view, which has been here given of the state and character of man is just, will not, because it cannot, be questioned. Conformed to it are all the views entertained of the same subjects by every man possessing the humility of the gospel. On these very considerations, especially as applied to himself, is his humility founded.

2. *Humility involves a train of affections accordant with such a sense of our character and conditions.*

It involves that candour and equity which dispose us to receive and acknowledge truth, however humbling to our pride, or painful to our fears, in preference to error, however soothing or flattering. The humble man feels assured, also, that it is his true interest to know and feel the worst of his situation: that a just sense of his condition may be the means of rendering it more hopeful and more desirable; that false conceptions of it, on the contrary, cannot possibly do him any good, and will, in all probability, do him much harm; that truth is a highway, which may conduct him to heaven; but that error is a labyrinth, in which he may be lost for ever.

Equally disposed is he to do justice to the several subjects of his contemplation. Cheerfully is he

ready to feel and to acknowledge that he is just such a being as he actually is; that he is no wiser, no better, no more honourable, and no more safe; but just as lowly, as dependant, as ignorant, as guilty, and as much in danger, as truth pronounces him to be. With the humiliation, dependance, and precariousness of his circumstances he is satisfied, because they are ordained by his Maker. His guilt he acknowledges to be real; and at the sight of it willingly takes his place in the dust. His sufferings he confesses to be merited, and therefore bows submissively beneath the rod. Claims he makes none, for he feels that there is nothing in himself to warrant them; and, although he wishes ardently to escape from his sin and misery, he never thinks of demanding it as a right; but, so far as he is permitted, humbly hopes it as a gift of free grace, as a mere blessing derived from the overflowing mercy of his Creator.

Among the subjects which his situation forces upon his mind, the means of expiating his guilt becomes one of primary importance. After surveying it on every side, he pronounces the attempt hopeless; and sees with full conviction, that, if God should mark iniquity, it would be impossible for him to stand. In this melancholy situation he does not, like the man of the world, rise up in haughty rebellion against God; he does not say, 'Who is the Almighty, that I should serve him; and what profit shall I have, if I pray unto him?' He does not insolently exclaim, 'Why doth he yet find fault, for whom hath resisted his will?' On the contrary, in the language of Job, he modestly cries out, 'Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.' With Daniel, he 'sets his face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fastings, and sackcloth and ashes; and he prays unto the Lord his God, and makes his confession, and says, O Lord, the great and dreadful God! keeping the covenant and mercy to them that

love thee, I have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled by departing from thy precepts, and from thy judgments.'

But, although in himself he sees no means of deliverance or escape, he finds in the Scriptures of truth ample provision made for both. The provision is complete. An expiation is there made for the sins of men; and a deliverance from the miseries to which they were destined, effectuated; which involve all that the most sanguine mind can wish concerning both. Still the scheme involves an absolute humiliation of human pride; for it represents man as totally destitute of any thing in his native character, or in his efforts, which can recommend him to God, or which can be regarded by the final Judge as any ground of his justification. It is a scheme of mere mercy; and every one who is to receive the blessings of it must come in the character of a penitent, supplicating for pardon through the righteousness of a Redeemer.

Nothing can be more painful to pride than this scheme of deliverance; but nothing can be more welcome to the heart of genuine humility. God, in the great work of forgiving, redeeming, and sanctifying man, appears to the humble, penitential mind, invested with peculiar glory, excellence, and loveliness. 'God,' says St. Paul, 'who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.' In the work of redemption, accomplished by this divine person, the character of God is seen by the sanctified mind in a light entirely new, and more honourable to him than that which is presented by any other work, either of creation or providence. His benevolence shines here in the exercise of mercy towards the apostate children of men, in a manner which is new and singular; a manner in which it has been displayed to the inhabitants of no other part of the universe. Here especially it is discerned, that

‘God is love;’ and the humble penitent is so deeply affected with the kindness manifested in expiating and forgiving sin, and renewing the soul, that he is ready to exclaim with the psalmist, ‘Not unto me, O Lord, not unto me, but to thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth’s sake.’ In the midst of his astonishment that such mercy should be extended to him, a poor, guilty, miserable wretch, unworthy, in his own view, of the least of all mercies, the pride, even of self-righteousness, is for a while, at least, laid asleep; and his thoughts and affections, instead of being turned towards himself, are absorbed in the condescension and goodness of his Father, Redeemer, and Sanctifier.

It is impossible for the man in whom this attribute is found not to turn his thoughts, from time to time, to the perfect purity of God. No subject of contemplation can more strongly impress upon the mind a sense of its own impurity. ‘In his sight the heavens themselves are not clean, and the angels before him are charged with folly.’ How much more ‘abominable and filthy’ to the eye of the penitent must man appear, who ‘drinketh iniquity like water?’ In the sight of this awful and most affecting object, he will almost necessarily exclaim, with Job, ‘I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee! Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.’

When such a man contemplates the character of his Christian brethren, emotions of the same general nature will necessarily occupy his mind. St. Paul has directed Christians to ‘forbear one another in all lowliness and meekness of mind, and to esteem others better than themselves.’ This precept, which to a man of the world appears absurd and incapable of being obeyed, involves no difficulty in the eye of him who is evangelically humble. The sins of other Christians are, of course, imperfectly known to him. Their sins of thought are all hidden from his eyes; their sins of action he rarely witnesses; and of those which are perpetrated in his presence, he cannot

know either the extent, or malignity. His own sins, in the mean time, both of heart and of life, are in a sense always naked before him, and he can hardly fail to discern, in some good degree, their number, their aggravations, and their guilt. Hence other Christians will, in a comparative sense, appear to him to be clean; while himself will seem unsound and polluted, from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot. In this situation, the difficulty of esteeming others better than himself, vanishes. Impossible, as it would be, for a proud man to think in this manner, the only difficulty to the humble man is to think in any other.

Such, at all times, with the exceptions for which the human character always lays the foundation, will be the emotions naturally imbibed, and strongly cherished, by Christian humility. But there are certain seasons in which they will be excited in a peculiar degree. Such will be the case in the house of God. Here he is brought immediately into the presence of his Maker; here he appears in the character of a sinner, and of a suppliant for mercy; here he draws nigh to his Maker in the solemn ordinances of the sanctuary; here the character and sufferings of the Redeemer are set before him in the light of heaven; here he witnesses all the wonders of redeeming, forgiving, and sanctifying love. What God is, and what he himself is, what he has done to destroy himself, and what God has done to save him from destruction, are here presented to his eye, and brought home to his heart, in the most affecting manner. In this solemn place, also, he is in the midst of his fellow Christians, uniting with them in their prayers and praises, and sitting with them at the table of Christ, to celebrate his sufferings, and 'the love wherewith he loved us, and gave himself for us.' In such a situation, how great and good must his Father, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, appear! How little, how unworthy, how sinful, himself! How strange must it seem, that he, who is unworthy of the least, should thus be put into the possession of

the greatest of all mercies! How naturally, how often, and how anxiously, will he inquire, whether it can be proper for such a being as himself, to unite with the followers of the Redeemer in their worship, share in their privileges, and participate in their hopes and in their joys!

Feelings of the same general nature will also be awakened, and often in an equal degree, when he retires to his closet to pray to his Father who is in secret. Here he withdraws entirely from the world, and meets his Maker face to face. The divine character and his own must be brought before his eyes in the strongest light, while he is employed in confessing his sins, and supplicating pardon and sanctification, gratefully acknowledging the blessings which he has received, and humbly asking for those which he needs. How naturally would he exclaim, 'Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou shouldest visit him!'

Such, if I mistake not, are the views formed by Christian humility; and such the affections of the mind in which it prevails.

REMARKS.

From these observations it is evident,

1. *That evangelical humility is exactly conformed to the real circumstances and character of men.*

The views which the humble man entertains of himself and of his condition are exactly suited to both. He is just such a being as he supposes himself to be, and in just such a condition. His origin is as lowly, his situation as dependant and precarious, his mind as ignorant and erring, his character as guilty, and his destination fraught with as much distress and danger, as he himself realizes. His views, therefore, are absolutely true and just. If such views then are honourable to a rational being, if no other thoughts can be honourable to such a being, then the views entertained by humility are honourable to the human character. On the contrary, the views of pride, or, as Mr. Hume chooses to style

it, *self-valuation*, are absolutely unsuited both to the condition and character of man. They are radically and universally unjust and false, and of course are only disgraceful and contemptible.

The affections which have been here considered, as involved in humility, are evidently no less just. They spring irresistibly from those views; and no sober mind can entertain the latter without experiencing the former. These affections are all plainly the harmony of the heart with the dictates of the understanding; dictates seen and acknowledged to be just and certain, and, where the heart is governed by candour, irresistible. Whenever the mind sees itself to be thus ignorant, erring, and sinful, and its situation thus dependant, precarious, and distressing, it cannot, without violence done to itself, fail of feeling both the character and condition, and of feeling them deeply; for they are objects of immeasurable importance to its whole well-being. Equally just are the affections which he exercises towards his Maker and his fellow Christians. The difference between the character of God and his own character being seen to be such; so entire, so vast, particularly as he is infinitely holy and pure, while himself is altogether polluted with guilt; no emotions can be proper towards this great and glorious Being which do not involve a strong sense of this amazing moral difference between him and itself. In such a case, where there is no humility, there can be no reverence towards God; and where there is no reverence, it is impossible that there should be any thing acceptable towards him.

In the same manner, humility enters into every other affection of a sanctified mind towards its Maker. Our views of the mercy of God exercised towards us, and the emotions excited by them, are exactly proportioned to the apprehensions which we form of our own unworthiness. He 'to whom much is forgiven,' our Saviour informs us, 'will love much. Pardon, mercy, and grace, are terms which mean little, if they have any meaning that is realized in

the eye of him who is not humbled for his sins, and who does not feel his own absolute need of pardon. The song of the redeemed is sung only by those who realize the love of Christ, because he has 'washed them from their sins in his own blood.' The gratitude, therefore, exercised to God for his unspeakable mercy, in forgiving our sins, and redeeming us from under the curse of the law, will in a great measure be created by our humility.

In the same manner does it enhance our complacency in the divine character. Of dependance it is the essence; of adoration, and indeed of all our worship, it is the substance and the soul.

2. *From these observations it is evident, that no man can hope for acceptance with God without humility.*

'God,' says the text, 'resisteth the proud, but giveth grace (or favour) to the humble.' The proud and the humble, are two great classes, including the whole of the human race. Of which class does it seem probable to the eye of sober reason, that the infinitely perfect Author of all things will select his own family, and the objects of his everlasting love? Those who possess the views and the spirit here described; or those who indulge the 'self-valuation so grateful to Mr. Hume? Those who boldly come before him, with 'God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men;' or those who 'dare not lift up their eyes to heaven; but, smiting upon their breasts, say, God be merciful to me a sinner!' How obvious is it to common sense, that, if he accept any of our race, they will be such as have just views of their character and condition; of their own absolute unworthiness; of the greatness of his mercy in forgiving their sins and sanctifying their souls; of the transcendent glory of the Redeemer in becoming their propitiation; and of the infinite benignity of the divine Spirit in renewing them in the image, and restoring them to the favour, of God! Who else can possess the spirit, who else can unite in the employments, who else can harmonize in the praises, of the first-born?

Let me ask, is it possible that a proud man should

be a candidate for immortal life; whether proud of his birth, his wealth, his station, his accomplishments, or his moral character? Suppose him to arrive in the regions of life, in what manner would his pride be employed? Which of these subjects would he make the theme of his conversation with the spirits of just men made perfect? How would he blend his pride with their worship; how would he present it before the throne of God?

3. *From these observations also we learn that humility is a disposition eminently lovely.*

‘Learn of me,’ says the Saviour of mankind to proud and perishing sinners, ‘for I am meek and lowly of heart.’ How astonishing a declaration from the mouth of him who controlled the elements with a word, at whose command the dead were raised to life, and at whose rebuke demons trembled and fled! Draw nigh, ye miserable worms of the dust, place yourselves by the side of this glorious person, and recite before him the foundations on which your loftiness rests; your riches, your rank, your talents, and your stations. How will these subjects appear, to his eye? How will those appear, who make them the grounds of their *self-valuation*? Meekness and lowliness of heart adorned him with beauty inexpressible. Can pride be an ornament to you?

Would you be amiable in the sight of God, you must essentially resemble Him who was ‘altogether lovely.’ Even you yourselves cannot but discern, that, had he been proud, it would have tarnished his character, and have eclipsed the face of the Sun of righteousness.

In the mean time let Christians remember, and feel, that they themselves will be lovely, exactly in proportion as they approximate to the character of the Redeemer in their humility. ‘Let the same mind,’ says St. Paul to the Philippians, ‘be in you, which was also in Christ; who, being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon

him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and, being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.' From what a height did he descend! How lowly the visible station which he assumed!

Your humility towards God will make you lovely in his sight; your humility towards your fellow Christians will make you lovely in theirs. In both cases it will be a combination of views and affections conformed to truth, exactly suited to your character and circumstances, and equally conformed to the good pleasure of God, and to the perfect example of his beloved Son. It will mingle with all your affections, and make them sweet and delightful. It will operate on all your conduct, and make it amiable in the sight of every beholder. From pride, and all its wretched consequences, it will deliver you. Of the grace of God it will assure you. 'For to this man will I look,' says the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, 'even to him, who is of a humble and contrite spirit; to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite.' It will accompany you through life, and lessen all the troubles, and increase all the comforts, of your pilgrimage. It will soften your dying bed, and enhance your hope and your confidence before the last tribunal.

SERMON XCV.

THE LAW OF GOD.

THE FIRST AND GREAT COMMANDMENT.

RESIGNATION.

and he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down and prayed, saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done.—LUKE xxii. 41, 42.

THE next exercise of love to God in our progress is resignation.

Of this excellence the text contains the most perfect example, which has been recorded or witnessed in the universe. Our Saviour while in the garden of Gethsemane having 'withdrawn from his disciples about a stone's cast, kneeled down, and prayed,' under an agonizing sense of the evils, which he was about to suffer. His prayer in the midst of this agony was, 'Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done!' The situation of Christ was much more trying than we can conceive. Yet in this situation he bows his will entirely to the will of God; and prays him to remove the cup, only on the condition that he is willing; and that not his own will, but the will of the Father, may be done. The occasion was wonderful; the resignation was complete. He yielded himself entirely into the hands of his Father, and earnestly desired that his will, whatever it should cost himself, might be done. Nothing can be more edifying than this example, nor can any thing be more instructive. By it we are taught,

1. That religious resignation is a quiet yielding of ourselves to the disposal of God, and not to the mere sufferance of evil.

Christ prayed earnestly and repeatedly, that, if:

were possible, the evil, or 'the cup, might pass from him.' That this was perfect rectitude on his part, will not be questioned. What he, with perfect rectitude, desired to escape, we may, with entire rectitude also, desire to escape. As *he* was not *willing* to suffer evil; it was *perfectly right* that he should *not* be willing. It is entirely right, therefore, that *we* should be equally unwilling.

But Christ was entirely willing to do and to suffer whatever God willed him to do, or to suffer. He was, however, disposed thus to do and suffer merely because it was the will of God; and because that will requires nothing but what is perfectly wise and good, and perfectly desirable. As, therefore, the perfect resignation of our Saviour was a yielding of himself to the will of God, and not at all to mere suffering; so it is clear, beyond a debate, that religious resignation is in every case of *this nature only*.

2. *That it is our duty to resign ourselves to the will of God entirely, and that in all situations of life.*

The situation in which Christ expressed the resignation in the text, was certainly much more trying than any which men experience in the present world. At the same time, he had not merited this distress by any fault or defect of his own. His pure and perfect mind was free alike from error and from sin. Accordingly, in that memorable prayer contained in the seventeenth chapter of John, and uttered just before his agony in the garden, he could say with perfect confidence, as well as with exact truth and propriety, 'I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father! glorify thou me, with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.' Yet, in this situation of peculiar distress, he gave up entirely every wish of his own; choosing rather to suffer these wonderful afflictions, if it were the will of God that he should suffer them, than to escape them, if it were *not*. Whatever afflictions befall us, we are ever to remember that we have deserved them, and that

they are always inferior in intenseness to those which were suffered by Christ. Our reasons for resigning ourselves entirely to the disposal of God therefore are, in some respects, greater than his. In all situations it of course becomes us to 'be still, and know, that he who afflicts us is 'God.'

To render our resignation entire, it is indispensable that it should be unmingled with murmuring, impatience, distrust of the goodness of God, or any dissatisfaction with his providence. We may lawfully wish not to suffer evil, considered by itself; but we cannot lawfully wish that the will of God should not be done. Nor can we lawfully complain at any time of that which is done by his will. He who complains has not, if he is resigned at all, arrived at the due degree of resignation. Jeremiah, with irresistible force, asks, 'Shall a living man complain; a man for the punishment of his sins?'

3. *Religious resignation is perfectly consistent with the clearest and strongest sense of the evils which we suffer; and with the deepest distress while we suffer.*

Christ, as I have observed, was perfectly resigned. Yet Christ felt, in the deepest manner, the whole extent of the evils which he suffered. This we know both because he prayed to be delivered from them, if it were possible; and because his agonies forced the sweat to descend upon him 'in the form of great drops of blood.' What Christ did in this respect, it is lawful for us to do. Christ felt these evils to their full extent, and yet was perfectly resigned. We, therefore, may, in the same manner feel the evils which we experience, and yet be the subjects, in this very conduct, of true evangelical resignation.

4. *Christian resignation is perfectly consistent with the most fervent supplications to God, for deliverance from the evils which we suffer.*

The evidence of this is complete in the example of Christ. Christ thus prayed, while yet he was perfectly resigned; we, of course, may thus pray, without lessening at all the degree, or affecting the genuineness, of our resignation.

The obligations which we are under to exercise this spirit are founded both in the command of God, and the nature of things. The command of God carries with it, in all cases, an authority and obligation which are without limits. With this authority he requires us to be resigned to his whole will ; asserting it, with the most perfect propriety, to be *his prerogative* alone to prescribe, and *our duty* entirely to obey. We are his creatures ; and are, therefore, under all possible obligation to do his pleasure. At the same time, his will is perfectly right, and ought exactly to be obeyed, even if there were no authority to bind, and no reward to retribute, our obedience. Our own supreme good is entirely promoted by our obedience only, both as the obedience itself is delightful, and as it is followed by a glorious and divine reward.

Resignation is not merely a single act, but a general course of obedience ; a general preparation of the heart to yield itself to God's known will, and his promised dispensations. I here include, and have all along included, what is commonly called *submission*. Submission differs from resignation in nothing but this : *Submission is yielding the heart to the divine will, in that which has already taken place, or is now taking place ;* and resignation, yielding the heart to that, which it is foreseen may or will *hereafter* take place. The spirit is exactly the same, as to its nature, in all instances ; and the difference is found only in its regarding the past, present, or future accomplishment of the divine will. This distinction is so nearly a nominal one only, that both names are used indiscriminately ; and of so little importance as to preclude any necessary regard to it in this Discourse.

This disposition is the only becoming temper in suffering creatures, so far as their sufferings are concerned. The sufferings of mankind in the present world are all expressions of the will of God. There are but three dispositions, with which they can be regarded ; *impatience, indifference, or acquiescence.* It

cannot be necessary for me to shew, that the last of these is the only spirit with which we can receive either profitably or becomingly the chastisements inflicted by the hand of God.

To acquiesce in the divine pleasure under sufferings is a strong, and eminently excellent exercise of love and reverence to God. It is not easy to conceive how we can give a higher or more decisive testimony of our delight in the divine character, or our approbation of the divine government, than by quietly yielding to that government in circumstances of suffering and sorrow; by testifying with the heart, that we have such a sense of the wisdom and goodness of God, as to be satisfied to undergo whatever afflictions he is pleased to send upon us, and to give up our own wishes and comforts, that the pleasure of God may be done, and his glory promoted. This is an exercise of love to our Maker which proves itself to be genuine and excellent, by the willing self-denial which it encounters, and by the victory which it gains over interest and pleasure powerfully present.

It is also to be remembered, that the Christian notwithstanding he is a Christian, is still a sinful being. Afflictions are punishments of his sins, incomparably less than he has deserved. Resignation to them is a candid, equitable, dutiful acknowledgment of the justice of God in sending them, and a humble confession of the sins by which they have been deserved.

By this spirit the general selfishness of the mind is gradually wasted away, the strength of passion and appetite continually weakened, its impiety prevented, its ingratitude destroyed, and its rebellion broken down. The rebel is converted into a child. A serenity and quietness of disposition take possession of the soul, allay the bitterness of its distresses, soothe all its tumults into peace, mingle comfort in the cup of sorrow, and happily blend with all its sufferings the inherent delight of resignation, a supporting sense of the approbation and favour of God.

REMARKS.

From this passage of Scripture, thus considered, it is evident,

1. *That willingness to suffer perdition is no part of Christian resignation.*

It is well known to my audience, that the contrary doctrine to that which I have here asserted has been taught by men of distinguished reputation for learning and piety; and it is equally well known, that no human learning and piety will furnish a sufficient security from error. All human opinions, therefore, may be warrantably questioned; and none are to be received, without evidence, upon the mere reputation of their authors. While, therefore, I would treat the authors with becoming respect, I shall take the liberty freely to question their opinions.

That Christian resignation does not at all involve a willingness to suffer perdition is, in my view, unanswerably clear from the text. To the arguments derived from this source, I shall, however, add a few, out of many, suggested by the nature of the subject.

(1.) *Christian resignation is resignation to nothing but the will of God.* This position has, if I mistake not, been proved beyond debate in the body of the Discourse. *The will of God by which we are to be governed is plainly that which is, or can be, known to us.* The proof of this, both from reason and Scripture, is complete. Reason teaches us, or rather we know by intuition, that it is impossible for us to be governed by a rule which we cannot know. Revelation informs us, that 'secret things belong to God;' and that only 'the things which are revealed belong to us, and to our children, for ever; that we may do all the words of his law.' That, then, which is not known to us cannot belong to us, in any sense, as a rule, or part of our duty.

But it is not known, and without a new and direct revelation it cannot be known, to any man living, to be the will of God, that he should suffer perdition.

The Scriptures reveal to us, that the impenitent and unbelieving will indeed suffer this terrible punishment. But they do not reveal to any man, that he himself will be impenitent and unbelieving when he leaves the world, or that he will finally be condemned. It is impossible, therefore, for any man to know in this world, that the will of God will require him to suffer perdition. If, then, he resigns himself to this dreadful allotment, as being a part of the will of God, he himself presumptuously establishes, by his own contrivance and conjecture, something as the will of God, which God has not declared to be such; which the man himself cannot know to be such, while in the present world; and which he cannot lawfully presume to be such. Instead, therefore, of resigning himself to the divine will, he resigns himself to a will which his own imagination creates for God; and is guilty of intruding into the province and assuming the prerogatives of his Creator.

(2.) *Every sincere professor of religion either knows or believes himself to be a Christian.*

If he *knows* himself to be a Christian, then he knows it to be contrary to the will of God that he should be finally condemned, or that he should suffer the miseries of perdition. To be willing in *this case* to suffer these miseries, is to be willing to suffer that which is known by him to be contrary to the will of God. It is a consent to prevent Christ of one trophy of his cross, one glorious fruit of his sufferings, and to take a gem from his crown of glory.

If the professor *believes* himself to be a Christian, then, in being willing to suffer perdition, he is willing to suffer in direct contradiction to what he *believes* to be the will of God. His belief here ought to have exactly the same influence on his disposition and conduct as his knowledge in the former case. Wherever we have not, and, at the time when we are to act, cannot have, *certainty*, we are under absolute obligation to be governed by the *highest probability*. In this case, therefore, the duty of the

professor is exactly the same as in the former.

When we remember that the sufferer becomes, of course, the eternal enemy of God and of all good, and that the professor, in thus consenting to suffer, consents in the same act to be the eternal enemy of God and of all good; and when this consent is yielded in direct contradiction to what he either knows or believes to be the will of God; it will, I think, be difficult to find a reason which will evince this conduct to be a part of the Christian's duty.

(3.) *There is no precept in the Scriptures enjoining this conduct.*

It certainly must seem strange, that a duty so extraordinary, and so fitted to perplex the minds of mere men, should, if it be really a duty, be nowhere expressly enjoined. Certainly, it is not likely to be easily embraced by any man. It can hardly be supposed, therefore, if it be really a part of the evangelical system, to be left to inference, philosophy, and supposition. No precept, so far as we are able to judge, needs more to be clear and express than that which should require of us this singular mental effort. But such a precept cannot be found.

(4.) *There is no example of such resignation recorded in the Scriptures.*

There are two examples, which are alleged in support of the resignation in question. The first is in Exod. xxxii. 31, 32, 'And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, Oh! this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt, forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book, which thou hast written.' The part of this text, which is alleged in support of the doctrine here contended against, is contained in these expressions: 'Yet now, if thou wilt, forgive their sin: if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book, which thou hast written.' It is supposed that Moses prayed to God to make him miserable, on the condition specified, throughout eternity.

Concerning this subject, I observe, first, that the expression, 'Blot me out of thy book, which thou

hast written,' is wholly figurative; and, like most other figurative language, is capable of being understood in various senses. To say the most, then, it is ambiguous and uncertain. I need not say, that such a doctrine as this ought not to be founded on an ambiguous passage of Scripture, nor on any uncertainty whatever.

Secondly: It will be admitted, that Moses, although he prayed in a violent state of emotion, yet spoke in some accordance with common sense. But the interpretation given to his words by those who teach this doctrine, makes him speak the most arrant nonsense. His words are, 'Yet now, if thou wilt, forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.' Here, according to the abettors of this doctrine, Moses prays that God would forgive their sin, if he was willing; and, if he was unwilling, that he would blot him out of the book of life. They say, that the benevolence of Moses was so great, that he chose rather to suffer endless misery, in order to obtain the forgiveness of his countrymen, than to be endlessly happy, and see them condemned. But they do not attend to the words of Moses. He himself says no such thing. On the contrary, he prays, 'that God would blot him out of his book, if he will *not* forgive their sin:' choosing not to be happy himself, unless they may be happy with him; and choosing to be endlessly miserable, rather than to be endlessly happy, unless they may be happy also. This, it must be acknowledged, if it be benevolence, is benevolence of a very extraordinary kind. Moses, according to this scheme, is desirous, if he cannot obtain all the good which he wishes, to have none; and, if his countrymen cannot be happy, to be miserable himself; to be endlessly miserable, without the least expectation of doing, without a possibility of doing, any good whatever to them: in plain language, to be endlessly miserable for the sake of being endlessly miserable.

It is also resignation of an extraordinary kind. Instead of being resignation to the will of God, it is

resignation directly opposed, and perfectly known by Moses himself to be directly opposed, to that will. Moses certainly knew that he was destined to endless life; and therefore certainly knew that this was the will of God. To this will, thus known, his prayer, interpreted according to this scheme, is directly contradictory. I hesitate not to say, that Moses never exercised resignation of this nature.

Thirdly; *The real meaning of this prayer is, that on the condition specified, God would take away his life.*

After the rebellion of the Israelites at the foot of the Mount. in which they made and worshipped the golden calf, God directed Moses to 'let him alone, that he might consume them;' and promised to make of Moses himself, 'a great nation.' Alluring as this promise was, Moses loved Israel too well to forsake them on this pressing occasion. He therefore besought God to forgive them, with great earnestness and anxiety; and prayed fervently also, that, if he would not forgive them, he would take away his own life; probably, that he might not witness the melancholy sight of the ruin of a people for whom he had done and suffered so much, and in whose interests his heart was so entirely bound up. The book, here called 'the book which God had written,' is a figurative allusion to a register, in which were recorded the names of living persons; and, in the present case, is considered as a register written by God, in which were enrolled the names of all living men. To blot out the name, is equivalent to taking away the life of the person thus registered. That this was what was intended by Moses, must, I think, be unanswerably evident from the observations which have been already made.

A similar prayer of the same illustrious man is recorded in Numb. xi. 14, 15, 'I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me. And, if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness.' The only difference between the two cases seems to be,

that in the former case, Moses prayed that he might not live to see the ruin of his people; and in the latter, requested to be released from life, because he was unable to bear the burden of superintending, and providing for them.

The other passage is Rom. ix. 1—3, 'I say the truth in Christ, I lie not; my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost; that I have great heaviness, and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh. Here it is supposed, that St. Paul declares himself desirous, or at least capable of being desirous, to suffer final perdition for the sake of rescuing his brethren, the Israelites, from their ruinous condition. But I apprehend the apostle says no such thing. For

In the first place, the declaration in the *Greek* is not, 'I could wish,' but 'I wished:' not *νυχοιμην* in the *optative* mode, but *νυχοιμην*, in the *indicative*. The apostle, therefore, here declares a fact which had taken place; not the state of his mind at the time present; nor a fact which might take place at that, or any future time. I do not deny, that the *indicative* is sometimes used for the *optative*, or, as it ought to be here understood, in the *potential* sense; to denote what *could* be done, instead of what *has* been done. But no case of this kind is to be presumed; nor is such a meaning to be admitted, unless the general construction of a passage renders the admission necessary.

Secondly: The admission of it here ruins the meaning of the passage altogether. It is introduced in this manner: 'I say the truth in Christ, I lie not; my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost.' Now, what is the assertion to gain credit to which these three declarations, two of them attended with all the solemnity of an oath, were made. It is found in the following verse. 'I have great heaviness and continual sorrow of heart.' Can it be imagined, that St. Paul would think it necessary or proper to preface this assertion in so solemn a man-

ner? Was it a matter even of surprise, that a person, afflicted and persecuted as he was, should be the subject of such sorrow? Could the apostle need the aid of a triple declaration, and a double oath, to make this assertion believed? And, if these were not necessary, can he be supposed to have used them for such a purpose; or for any purpose whatever?

As this cannot have been the apostle's meaning of this passage, so, happily, that meaning is sufficiently obvious. St. Paul, it is well known, was considered by the Jews as their bitter enemy; as hating their temple, worship, and nation; and as conspiring with the Gentiles to subvert all those which they esteemed their best interests. This prejudice of theirs against him, was an immense evil: for it not only obstructed powerfully, and often fatally, the success of his evangelical labours among the Gentiles; but, in almost all instances, prevented the Jews from receiving the gospel. This evil the apostle felt in its full force, as he teaches us on many occasions, by endeavouring earnestly to clear himself of the imputation. The present is one of those instances; and the meaning of the passage is rendered perfectly clear, and highly important, when it is considered in this manner; and the propriety of the solemn preface with which it commences, fully evinced. The words rendered, 'For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ,' ought to be included, as they plainly were intended to be, in a parenthesis. The passage, truly translated in this manner, will run thus: 'I say the truth in Christ, I lie not; my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost; that I have great heaviness, and continual sorrow in my heart (for I also wished myself separated from Christ), for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.' That the apostle had really this sorrow and heaviness for his nation, he knew would be doubted by some, and disbelieved by others. He, therefore, naturally and properly appears to God, for the reality of his love to them, and for the truth of the declaration in which it is

asserted. To shew his sympathy with them in their ruined state, he reminds them, that he was once the subject of the same violent unbelief, and alienation from Christ; and that then *he* earnestly chose to be what he here calls 'anathema,' justly rendered in the margin, '*separated*, from Christ,' just as *they* now chose it. A person once in this condition, would naturally be believed to feel deeply the concerns of such as were now in the same condition, and would therefore allege this consideration with the utmost force and propriety.

It will, I am aware, be here said, that this interpretation derogates exceedingly from the nobleness and expansiveness of the apostle's benevolence, as exhibited in the construction which I am opposing. It seems to me, that St. Paul's *own* meaning is as really valuable as any which is devised for him by his commentators. There can be no more dangerous mode of interpreting the Scriptures, than to drop their obvious sense, and to substitute for it one which happens to be more agreeable to ourselves. Were I to comment in this manner on the passage before us, I should say, that the meaning to which I object is absurd and monstrous; and that which I adopt, becoming the apostle's character. At the same time, I would lay no stress on this remark. My concern is with the real sense of the words. St. Paul must be allowed to have spoken good sense; and this the obvious and grammatical construction here given to his language, makes him speak. Whereas, the construction which I oppose, makes him speak little less than absolute nonsense.

These two passages, therefore, although relied on to support the doctrine which I oppose, do not affect the question at all; and the Scriptures are equally destitute of examples as of precepts to warrant the doctrine.

(5.) *There is no motive to induce the mind to this resignation.*

By this I do not intend, that no motive is alleged; but that there is none by which the mind of a ra-

tional being can be supposed to be influenced. The motives by which Christians are induced to be unwilling to suffer perdition, are, (1.) the loss of endless and perfect happiness in heaven ; (2.) the loss of endless and perfect virtue, or holiness ; (3.) the suffering of endless and perfect sin ; (4.) the suffering of endless and perfect misery ; and, (5.) the glory of God in the salvation of a sinner. The motive which must produce the willingness in question, must be of sufficient magnitude to overbalance all these ; each of them infinite. Now what is the motive alleged ? It is the delight experienced by the Christian in seeing the glory of his Maker promoted by his perdition. Without questioning the possibility of being influenced by this motive, as far as the *nature of the case* merely, is concerned, I observe, that the willingness to glorify God in this manner, and the pleasure experienced in glorifying him (which is the same thing), is to endure but for a moment ; that is, during this transient life. The pain through which this momentary pleasure is gained is, on the contrary, infinite, or endless, in each of the methods specified above. Will it be believed, that, if every volition of man is as the *greatest apparent good*, there can be in this case a volition, nay, a series of volitions, contrary to the greatest apparent good—a good, infinitely outweighing that by which these volitions are supposed to be excited ? I say this good is momentary ; because the subjects of perdition, immediately after entering upon their sufferings, hate and oppose the glory of God throughout eternity. Whatever good, therefore, the Christian can enjoy in glorifying his Creator, he can enjoy only during the present life.

It ought to be observed, that the resignation here required of the Christian, extends infinitely beyond that which was required of Christ himself. He was required to undergo only finite and temporary sufferings. The Christian is here required to be willing to undergo infinite sufferings. The sufferings of Christ were, and he knew they were, to be rewarded

with infinite glory and happiness. Those of the Christian are only to terminate daily in increasing shame, sin, and woe, for ever. Christ 'for the joy set before him, endured the cross, and despised the shame.' There is no joy set before the Christian.

As a rule of determining *whether we are Christians or not*, it would seem, that hardly any supposable one could be more unhappy. If we should allow the doctrine to be sound and scriptural, it will not be pretended that any, unless very eminent, saints arrive at the possession of the spirit in such a degree, as to be satisfied that they are thus resigned. None but these, therefore, will be able to avail themselves of the evidence derived from this source. To all others the rule will be not only useless, but in a high degree perplexing, and filled with discouragement. To be thus resigned, will, to say the least, demand a vigour and energy of piety not often found. Rules of self-examination incomparably plainer, and more easy of application, are given us in the Scriptures, fitted for all persons, and for all cases. Why, with those in our possession, we should resort to this, especially when it is nowhere found in the sacred volume, it would be difficult to explain. Yet, if this is not the practical use to be made of this doctrine, it would not be easy to assign to it any use at all.

The resignation of the Scriptures, as I have before observed, is either a cheerful submission to the evils which we actually suffer, or a general, undefinable preparation of mind to suffer such others as God may choose to inflict. In the Bible this spirit is, I believe, never referred to any evils which exist beyond the grave. If this remark be just, as I think it will be found, there can be no benefit in extending the subject farther than it has been extended by revelation. If I mistake not, every good consequence expected from the doctrine which I have opposed, will be derived from the resignation here described; while the mind will be disembarrassed of the very numerous and very serious difficulties which are inseparable from the doctrine in question.

2. *Resignation, as here described, is an indispensable duty of mankind.*

The government of God, even in this melancholy world, is the result of his perfect wisdom, power, and goodness. Now nothing is more evident, than that the government which flows from such a source must be absolutely right; or, in other words, must be what wisdom and virtue in us would certainly and entirely approve. To be resigned to such a government therefore would be a thing of course, were we perfectly wise and virtuous. But what this character would prompt us to do, it is now our indispensable duty to do.

This, however, is not the only nor the most affecting view which we are able to take of the subject. The government of God in this world is a scheme of mercy; the most glorious exhibition which can exist of infinite goodness. Unless our own perverseness prevent, the most untoward, the most afflicting, dispensations, however painful in themselves, are really fitted in the best manner to promote our best interests. 'We know,' says St. Paul, 'that all things do work (or, as in the Greek, labour) together for good to them that love God.'

'Good,' says Mr. Hervey,

'Good, when He gives, supremely good,

Nor less, when he denies;

Ev'n crosses from his sov'reign hand

Are blessings in disguise.'

Surely in such a state of things it must be the natural, the instinctive, conduct of piety to acquiesce in dispensations of this nature. Under the afflictions which it demands, and which of course it cannot but involve, we may and must at times smart, as a child under the rod, when administered by the most affectionate parental hand; but, like children influenced by filial piety, we shall receive the chastening with resignation and love.

3. *Resignation is also a most profitable duty.*

The profit of this spirit is the increase which is

always brings, of virtue and happiness. Our pride and passion, by which we are naturally and of choice governed, conduct us only to guilt and suffering. So long as their dominion over us continues, we daily become more sinful and more miserable, as children become, during the continuance of their rebellion against their parents. The first step towards peace, comfort, or hope in this case, is to attain a quiet, submissive spirit. That God will order the things of the world as we wish, ignorant and sinful as we are, cannot be for a moment believed. The only resort which remains for us, therefore, is to be satisfied with what he actually does; and to believe that what he does is wise and good, and if we will permit it, wise and good for us. To be able to say, 'Thy will be done,' says Dr. Young, 'will lay the loudest storm;' whether of passion within, or affliction without.

Children, when they have been punished, are often, and if dutiful children, always, more affectionate, and dutiful, and amiable than before. Just such is the character of the children of God, when they exercise evangelical resignation under his chastening hand. Every one of them, like David, finds it 'good for *himself*' that he has been afflicted; an increase of his comfort; an increase of his virtue and loveliness.

As this disposition regards events not yet come to pass, its effects are of the same desirable nature. For the wisdom and goodness, the fitness and beneficial tendency, of all that is future, the pious mind will rely with a steady confidence on the perfect character of God. With this reliance it will regularly believe that there is good interwoven with all the real as well as apparent evil which, from time to time, may take place. With this habitual disposition in exercise, the resigned man will be quiet and satisfied, or at least supported, when others are borne down; and filled with hope and comfort, when worldly men sink in despair. All that dreadful train of fears, distresses, and hostilities, which, like

a host of besiegers, assault the unresigned, and sack their peace, he will have finally put to flight. Safety and serenity have entered the soul, and the Spirit of truth has there found a permanent mansion. Whatever evils still remain in it, his delightful influence gradually removes, as cold, and frost, and snow vanish before the beams of the vernal sun. He will yield God his own place and province, and rejoice, that 'his throne is prepared in the heavens,' and that 'his kingdom is over all.' His own station he will at the same time cheerfully take, with the spirit of a dutiful and faithful subject, or an obedient child; and confide in the divine wisdom for such allotments as are best suited to make him virtuous, useful, and happy. In this manner he will disarm afflictions of their sting, deprive temptations of their danger, and his spiritual enemies of their success, by quietly committing himself and his interests to the disposal of his Maker. In this manner he will become effectually prepared for that glorious and happy world, in which all these evils will have 'passed away;' and be succeeded by a new, divine, and eternal train of enjoyment. In this manner 'the work of righteousness' in his mind 'will be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness, and assurance for ever.'

SERMON XCVI.

THE LAW OF GOD.

THE SECOND GREAT COMMANDMENT.

LOVE TO OUR NEIGHBOUR.

And the second is like; namely, this: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.—MARK xii. 31.

IN several preceding Discourses, I have considered the great duties of love, reverence, and humility towards God, and resignation to his will; and given a

summary account of the other duties. I shall now proceed to an examination of the *second commandment*.

In this precept we are required 'to love our neighbour as ourselves.' In canvassing the duty here enjoined, I shall consider,

I. *Its nature:*

II. *Its extent.*

I. *I shall make a few observations concerning the nature of this duty.*

Before I proceed directly to this subject, it will be proper to remind my audience, that in the Discourse concerning *love*, considered as *an attendant of regeneration*, I exhibited it at length as a *disinterested disposition*; and in this particular view exhibited its *nature*, so far as is necessary to this system. Nothing farther will be needed under this head, except an explanation of the *degree* in which we are required to love our neighbour, expressed in the words '*as thyself*.'

This phraseology has been very differently understood by different persons. Some have supposed it to contain a direction, that we should love our neighbour with the *same kind* of love, which is exercised towards *ourselves*. This plainly cannot be its meaning. The love which we usually and naturally exercise towards ourselves is selfish and sinful. Such a love as this may be, and often is, exercised towards our children, and other darling connexions; and wherever it exists, is of course sinful, and cannot therefore have been commanded by God. At the same time, it is physically impossible that we should exercise it towards our fellow-creatures at large, the real objects of the affection required in the text, as I shall have occasion to shew under the second head. Others have insisted, that we are required to love them *in the same manner* as ourselves. This cannot be the meaning. For we love ourselves inordinately and unreasonably, without candour or equity; even when the kind of love is really evangelical. Others, still, have supposed, that the command obliges us to love

our neighbour in *exactly the same degree* in which we ought to love ourselves. This interpretation, though nearer the truth than the others, is not I apprehend altogether agreeable to the genuine meaning of the text. It has, if I mistake not, been heretofore shewn satisfactorily, that we are in our very nature capable of understanding, realizing, and feeling whatever pertains to ourselves, more entirely than the same things when pertaining to others; that our own concerns are committed to us by God in a peculiar manner; that God has made it in a peculiar manner our duty to 'provide for our own, especially for those of our own household;' and that thus a regard to ourselves, and those who are ours, is our duty in a peculiar degree. To these things it may be justly added that we are not bound to love *all* those included under the word *neighbour*, in the *same degree*. Some of these persons are plainly of much greater importance to mankind than others; are possessed of greater talents, of higher excellence, and of more usefulness. Whether we make their happiness or their excellence the object of our love; in other words, whether we regard them with benevolence, or complacency we ought plainly to make a difference, and often a wide one, between them; because they obviously and exceedingly differ in their characters and circumstances. A great, excellent, and useful man, such as St. Paul was, certainly claims a higher degree of love from us, than a person totally inferior to him in these characteristics.

Besides, if this rule of entire equality had been intended in the command, we ought certainly to have been enabled in the *natural* sense to perform this duty. But it is perfectly evident that no man, however well disposed, can exactly measure on all occasions the degree of love exercised by him towards his neighbour, or towards himself; or determine in many cases, whether he has or has not loved himself and his neighbour in the same degree. It is plain, therefore, that, according to this scheme, we cannot, however well inclined, determine whether

we do or do not perform our duty. But it is incredible that God should make this conduct our duty; and yet leave us, in the *natural* sense, wholly unable to perform it.

For these, and various other reasons, I am of opinion, that the precept in the text requires us to love our *neighbour generally and indefinitely as ourselves*. The love which we exercise towards him is ever to be the same in *kind*, which we ought to exercise towards ourselves, regarding both ourselves and him as members of the intelligent kingdom; as interested substantially in the same manner in the divine favour; as in the same manner capable of happiness, moral excellence, and usefulness; of being instruments of glory to God, and of good to our fellow-creatures, as being originally interested alike in the death of Christ; and, with the same general probability, heirs of eternal life. This explanation seems to be exactly accordant with the language of the text. *As* does not always denote exact equality. Frequently it indicates equality in a general, indefinite sense; and, not unfrequently, a strong resemblance, approximating towards an equality. There is no proof, that it intends an exact equality in the text.

In many cases, for example, in most cases of commutative justice, and in many of distributive justice, it is in our power to render to others exactly that which we render to ourselves. Here I apprehend, *exactness* becomes the measure of our duty. The love which I have here described is evidently *disinterested*; and would in our own case supply motives to our conduct so numerous and so powerful as to render selfish affections useless to us. Selfishness, therefore, is a principle of action totally unnecessary to intelligent beings as such, even for their own benefit.

II. *The love here required extends to the whole intelligent creation.*

This position I shall illustrate by the following observations:—

1. That it extends to *our families, friends, and countrymen*, will not be questioned.

2. That it extends to *our enemies*, and by consequence to *all mankind*, is decisively taught by our Saviour in a variety of scriptural passages. 'Ye have heard, that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them who despitefully use you, and persecute you: that ye may be the children of your Father, who is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil, and on the good; and sendeth rain on the just, and the unjust.' Matt. v. 43, &c. And again: 'For if ye love them who love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. But I say unto you, love ye your enemies; and do good, and lend hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great; and ye shall be called the children of the Highest.' Luke vi. 32. 35. The term *neighbour* in this precept is explained by Christ, at the request of a scribe, in the parable of the Good Samaritan; Luke x. 25: and, with unrivalled force and irresistible conviction, is shewn to include the worst and bitterest enemies. Concerning this subject the Scriptures have left no room for debate.

At the same time, it cannot but be satisfactory and useful, to examine this subject as it appears in its nature, and is connected with other kindred moral subjects.

It is well known that the Pharisees held the doctrine, that, while we were bound to love our neighbour, that is, our friends, it was lawful to hate our enemies. It is equally well known, that multitudes in every succeeding age have imbibed the same doctrine; and that, in our own age and land, enlightened, as we are, by the sunshine of the gospel, there are not wanting multitudes who adopt the same doctrine, and insist, not only that they may lawfully hate their enemies, but also revenge themselves on such as have injured them, with violent and extreme

(1.) *That the command, to love our enemies, is enforced by the example of God.*

This is the very argument used to enforce this precept by our Saviour. 'Love ye your enemies; and do good to them that hate you; and ye shall be called the children of the Highest; for he is kind to the evil and unthankful.—Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father who is in heaven is merciful.' The example of God is possessed of infinite authority. We see in it the conduct which infinite wisdom dictates, and in which it delights; and learn the rules of action by which it is pleased to govern itself. All that is thus dictated and done, is supremely right and good. If we wish our own conduct to be right and good; we shall become 'followers of God, as dear children,' in all his imitable conduct, and particularly in that which is so strongly commended to our imitation. Christ also, who has presented to our view in his own life the conduct of God, in such a manner as to be more thoroughly understood, and more easily copied by us, has, in his prayer for his murderers, while suspended on the cross, enforced the precept in the text with unrivalled energy. Nothing could with greater power, or more commanding loveliness, require us to 'go and do likewise.'

To hate our enemies is directly opposed to the authority and the glory of these examples. The examples are divinely excellent and lovely; the conduct opposed to them is, of course, altogether vile and hateful. Accordingly, this conduct is exhibited to us for the purpose of commending the same precept also to our obedience, as the conduct of the worst of men. These love their friends, and hate their enemies; even publicans and sinners do this; and all who do this, and nothing more, bear a moral resemblance to publicans and sinners.

(2.) *If we are bound to love those only who are friends to us, we are under no obligation to love God any longer than while he is our friend.*

If we are not bound to love our enemies, when

ever God becomes an enemy to us we are not bound to love him. Of course, those who are finally condemned, are freed from all obligation to love God, because he is their enemy. In refusing to love him, therefore, they are guilty of no sin; but are thus far perfectly innocent, and perfectly excellent; because they do that which is perfectly right. Neither the happiness, nor the excellence of God, furnishes any reason, according to this scheme, why we should regard him either with benevolence or complacency. In the same manner, every person in the present world can, by committing the unpardonable sin, release himself from all obligation to love his Maker, because in this manner he renders God his enemy. In the same manner, every person under a sentence of reprobation is released from his obligation to love God; and persons of both these characters are thenceforth entirely innocent and unblamable. According to this doctrine also, sinners can, and do, continually lessen their obligation to love God, in proportion as they make him more and more angry with them day by day. By advancing, therefore, in a course of opposition and disobedience to God, they advance nearer and nearer to an unblamable life and character.

(3.) *According to this doctrine, good men are not bound, in ordinary cases, to love sinners.*

That sinners are ordinarily enemies to good men, will not be questioned; that they often are very bitter enemies, cannot be denied. If then, this doctrine be true, good men are plainly not bound to love them, nor, of course, to befriend them, to relieve their distresses, to promote their happiness, nor to seek their salvation.

(4.) *According to this doctrine, sinners are not, ordinarily, bound to love each other.*

Sinners are not only enemies to good men, but to each other. In every such case, they are relieved from all obligation to love each other; and, so long as they continue to be enemies, are justified not only in the sight of man, but in the sight of God also, in

withholding their love, and the expression of it, from each other.

Let us now, for a moment, attend to the necessary and practical consequences of this doctrine. A moral being, whose moral conduct is such as to justify us in withholding our love from him, cannot be regarded with indifference, but must, of course, be hated; and, so far as I can see, may justifiably be hated, because his character is really hateful. But if it be right to hate our enemies, it is, undoubtedly, right to exhibit our hatred of them in its proper expressions, such as censure, punishment, and hostilities. On this principle, mankind would contend with each other in their public and private controversies, on the ground that it was right; because it was dictated by conscience, and not merely by passion. He who beheld an enemy, would be justified in hating him; and he who was thus hated would, on the same ground, be justified in reciprocating the hatred. To express this justifiable hatred in quarrels, would be equally accordant with rectitude; and men would fight each other on a new basis of principle. Revenge would be accounted 'doing God service.' The persecutor, burning with rage against the miserable victims of his cruelty, exulting in his successful ravages of human happiness, and smiling over the tortures of the rack, and the agonies of the flame, would with new confidence say, 'Let the Lord be glorified.' War, instead of being the conflict of pride, avarice, ambition, and wrath, would be changed into a universal crusade of piety; and new Mohammeds would stalk through the world to execute righteousness by butchery, and plant truth with the sword. Every national contest would become a war of extermination. Every land would be changed, by a professed spirit of righteousness, into a mere field of slaughter; and every age, by the mere dictates of conscience, converted into a period of unmingled and immeasurable woe.

The contrary principle in good men, whenever they are found, is an extensive source of the peace

and comfort actually enjoyed in this unhappy world ; and its influence on the consciences, even of wicked men, is such as to effectuate no small quiet and comfort for themselves and others ; and to prevent much of the evil naturally flowing from this pernicious doctrine.

But the one half of the story is not yet told. Had God adopted this doctrine as the rule of his own conduct, what would long since have become of mankind? Sinners never love God, but always hate him ; and of consequence rebel against his government, violate his law, and oppose his designs. In other words, they are uniformly and unceasingly his enemies. Had God then been governed by this principle, had he hated his enemies, nay, had he exercised no love, tenderness, or compassion for them, he must immediately have exerted his infinite power to render them only and eternally miserable. In this case, no scheme of redemption would ever have been formed for our miserable race by the infinite mind. The compassionate and glorious Redeemer, instead of becoming incarnate, instead of living and dying for sinners, would have ' clad himself only with vengeance as a cloak ;' and arrayed himself with anger as a robe and a diadem. Instead of ascending the cross, and entering the tomb, he would nearly ' have trodden the winepress alone, and trampled the people in his fury. Their blood would have been sprinkled on his garments, and stained all his raiment.' ' The day of vengeance' only would have been ' in his heart ; and the year of his redeemed' would have never ' come.'

No sun would now rise upon the unjust ; or rain descend upon the evil and unthankful. The word of life would never have been revealed to mankind. The sabbath, with its serene, peaceful, and cheering beams, would never have dawned upon this melancholy world ; nor the sanctuary unfolded its doors, that sinners might enter in, and be saved. The voice of mercy would never have been heard within its hallowed walls. God would never, with infinite

tenderness, have called rebels and apostates to faith, repentance, and holiness, in the Lord Jesus Christ; nor proffered pardon and peace to the returning penitent.

Heaven would never have opened the gates of life and glory to this ruined world. The 'general assembly of the first-born' would never have been gathered; nor would that divine kingdom, which shall for ever increase in its peace and prosperity, its virtue and glory, ever have begun.

The fairest attribute, the peculiar excellence of the Godhead, the divine mercy, would neither have been unfolded nor existed. Angels would never have sung, 'Glory to God in the highest; peace on earth; and good-will towards men.' On the contrary, sin without bounds, and misery without end, would have reigned with an uninterrupted and eternal dominion over all the millions of the race of Adam.

From these considerations it is unanswerably evident, that *all mankind* are included under the word *neighbour*.

3. This term, of course, extends to *all other intelligent beings*, so far as they are capable of being objects of love; or, in other words, *so far as they are capable of being happy*.

To desire the happiness of beings who cannot be happy, is to exercise our affections in vain. To desire the happiness of those whom God has doomed for their sins to everlasting suffering, is to oppose his known, declared will. But even in these extreme cases, it is, I apprehend, our duty to feel a general spirit of benevolence towards the miserable sufferers. God has informed us, that 'he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked.' It is doubtably right and proper for us to experience the same disposition. This doctrine may be illustrated in the following manner: Were we to receive tidings from God, that these unhappy beings would, at some future period, be restored to holiness and happiness, every being, under the influence of this love,

would rejoice with inexpressible joy ; and would find, that instead of indulging enmity towards them, he had ever been ready to exercise a benevolent concern for their welfare.

That virtuous beings throughout the universe are proper objects of this love will hardly be disputed. Of these beings, angels only are known to us ; and their character, as unfolded in the Scriptures, is a complete proof of this position. To mankind they are related merely as intelligent creatures of the same God. Yet they cheerfully become ministering spirits for the benefit of men, inhabitants of a distant world, of the humblest intelligent character, enemies to their Creator, and enemies to themselves. Such an example decides this point without a comment.

4. The love required in this precept extends in its operations to *all the good offices which we are capable of rendering to others.*

The benevolence enjoined by God is, as was formerly observed, an active principle, prompting those whom it controls to exert themselves in all the modes of beneficence which are in their power, and are required by the circumstances of their fellow-men. Infinitely different from the cold philanthropy of modern philosophers, which spends itself in thoughts and words, in sighs and tears, its whole tendency is to employ itself in the solid and useful acts of kindness, by which the real good of others is efficaciously promoted. This philanthropy overlooks the objects which are around it, and within its reach ; and exhausts itself in pitying sufferers in foreign lands and distant ages : sufferers so distant as to be incapable of receiving relief from any supposable beneficence, which it might exercise. These are, indeed, most convenient objects of such a philanthropy. For, as it is impossible to do them good by any acts of kindness which are in our power, we naturally feel ourselves released from the obligation to attempt any such acts ; and thus enjoy, with no small self-complacency, the satisfaction of believing that,

although we do no good, we are still very benevolent; and are contented with thinking over the good which we would do, were the objects of our benevolent wishes within our reach. It is remarkable, that all kindness of this nature is ardent and vivid upon paper, and flourishes thriftily in conversation; but, whenever it is summoned to action by the sight of those whom it ought to befriend, it languishes, sickens, and dies. Its seat is only in the imagination; and, unfortunately, it has no connexion either with the purse, the hand, or the heart. In the same manner, professed hospitality is often struck dumb by the arrival of a guest, and boasted patriotism at the appearance of a proposed subscription for some beneficial public purpose.

Such is not the love of the gospel. The happiness of others is its original, commanding object; and the promotion of that happiness its employment, and delight. The objects for whom, and the manner in which, it is to be employed, are felt to be of no consequence, if good can really be done. The kind of good is also a matter of indifference, provided it be real, and as extensive as the nature of the case will admit.

It will be useful to illustrate this subject in a number of particulars, sufficient to exhibit its tendency and extent in the variety of its operations.

(1.) The love required in this precept will prevent us from *voluntarily injuring others*.

‘Love worketh no ill to his neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.’ The stress here laid upon this characteristic of love is remarkable. For St. Paul declares that for this reason it is the fulfilling of the law. We are not, indeed, to understand, that this is the *only* reason, but that it is one very important reason. At the same time we are to remember, that voluntary beings who do no ill, always and of course do good.

From this characteristic of evangelical love we learn, that those who are controlled by it cannot be the authors of falsehood, fraud, slander, sophistry,

seduction, pollution, quarrels, oppressions, plunder, or war. All these, in whatever degree they exist, are real, and usually are great injuries to others. These, therefore, are in no sense fruits of love. They may, and do indeed, exist, in greater or less degrees, in the minds and lives of those who are the subjects of it; but it is because their love is partial and imperfect. Were this spirit to become the universal and the only character of mankind, what a mighty mass of human calamities would vanish from the world!

(2.) Among the positive acts of beneficence dictated by the love of the gospel, *the contribution of our property* forms an interesting part. To feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, and to perform other acts generally of the same nature, have by mankind at large been esteemed such eminent and important specimens of this spirit, as to have appropriated to themselves the very name of *charity*, that is, of *love*, to the exclusion of other efforts, not less truly benevolent. They are at the same time accompanied more obviously than most other communications of beneficence by the appearance of self-denial, and of doing good without reference to a reward.

But although acts of this kind are peculiarly amiable, and peculiarly respected, they are still no more really dictated by evangelical love, than the contribution of our property to the purposes of hospitality, to the support of schools and colleges, the erection of churches, the maintenance of ministers, and the support of government. All these are important means of human happiness; and he who does not cheerfully contribute to them, is either ignorant of their nature and his own duty, or is destitute of evangelical benevolence.

(3.) Love to our neighbour dictates also *every other office of kindness which may promote his present welfare*.

Under this extensive head are comprehended our instruction of others, our advice, our countenance, our reproof, our sympathy with them in their joy.

and sorrows ; those which are called our civilities, our obligingness of deportment, our defence of their good name, our professional assistance, our peculiar efforts for their relief and comfort on occasions which peculiarly demand them ; and especially, those kind offices which are always needed by the sick and afflicted. The tendency of love, like that of the needle to the pole, is steadily directed to the promotion of happiness, and of course to the relief of distress. The cases in which this object can be obtained, and the modes in which it can be accomplished, are of no consequence in the eye of love. It only asks the questions, *how, when, and where*, good can be done ? When these are satisfactorily answered, it is ever ready to act with vigour and efficacy, to the production of any good ; except that it is regularly disposed to devote its labours especially to that which is especially necessary. As its sole tendency is to promote happiness, it is evident that it cannot but be ready to act for this end, in whatever manner may be in its power. He, therefore, who is willing to do good in some cases, and not in others, will find little reason to believe that he possesses the benevolence of the gospel.

(4.) Love to our neighbour is especially directed to *the good of his soul*.

As the soul is of more worth than the body, as the interests of eternity are more important than those of time ; so the immortal concerns of man demand proportionally the good-will and the kind offices of his fellow-men. In discharging the duties created by this great object of benevolence, we are required to instruct, counsel, reprove, rebuke, restrain, encourage, comfort, support, and invigorate them, so far as it shall be in our power. We are also bound to forgive cheerfully their unkindness to us ; to bear with their frowardness ; to endure patiently their slowness of apprehension, or reformation ; and to repeat our efforts for their good, as we have opportunity, unto the end. For this purpose we are bound to *hope concerning them, so long as hope can be*

cised, that neither we nor they may be discouraged; and to *pray* for them 'without ceasing.' All these offices of kindness are the immediate dictates of evangelical love. He, therefore, who does not perform them, in some good measure at least, can lay no claim to the benevolence of the gospel.

REMARKS.

1. From these observations it is evident, that *the second great command of the moral law is, as it is expressed in the text, 'like the first.'*

It is not only prescribed by the same authority, and possessed of the same obligation, unalterable, and eternal; but it enjoins exactly the exercise of the same disposition. The love required in this command is exactly the same which is required in the first; a single character, operating now towards God, and now towards our fellow-creatures. Equally does it resemble the first in its importance. *That* regulates all our conduct towards God; *this* towards other intelligent beings. Each is of infinite importance, each is absolutely indispensable. If either did not exist, or were not obeyed, a total and dreadful chasm would be found in the virtue and happiness of the universe. United, they perfectly provide for both. The duty prescribed in the first is undoubtedly first in order; but that prescribed by the last is no less indispensable to the glory of God, and the good of the intelligent creation.

2. *Piety and morality are here shewn to be inseparable.*

It has, I trust, been satisfactorily evinced, that the love required in the divine law is a single disposition, indivisible in its nature, diversified and distinguishable only as exercised towards different objects. When exercised towards God, it is called *piety*; when exercised towards mankind, it is customarily styled *morality*. Wherever both objects are known, both are loved of course by every one in whom this disposition exists. He, therefore, who loves not God, loves not man; and he who does not love man, does not love God.

3. *We here see, that the religion of the Scriptures is the true and only source of all the duties of life.*

On the obedience of the first and great commandment is founded the obedience of the second: and 'on these two hang all the law and the prophets,' the precepts of Christ, and the instructions of the apostles. Religion commences with love to God, and terminates in love to man. Thus begun, and thus ended, it involves every duty, and produces every action which is rewardable, praiseworthy, or useful. There is nothing which ought to be done, which it does not effectuate; there is nothing which ought not to be done, which it does not prevent. It makes intelligent creatures virtuous and excellent. It makes mankind good parents and children, good husbands and wives, good brothers and sisters, good neighbours and friends, good rulers and subjects; and renders families, neighbourhoods, and states, orderly, peaceful, harmonious, and happy. As it produces the punctual performance of all the duties, so it effectually secures all the rights, of mankind: for *rights in us are nothing but just claims to the performance of duties by others.* Thus the religion of the Scriptures is the true and only source of safety, peace, and prosperity to the world.

SERMON XCVII.

THE LAW OF GOD.

THE SECOND GREAT COMMANDMENT.

THE EFFECTS OF BENEVOLENCE ON PERSONAL
HAPPINESS.

I have shewed you all things, how that, so labouring, ye ought to support the weak; and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.—ACTS xx. 35.

IN the preceding Discourse I considered, at some length, that love to our neighbour which is required in the second command of the moral law. I shall

now attempt to shew, *that this disposition is more productive of happiness than any other.*

The speech of St. Paul, recorded in this chapter, I have long considered as the most perfect example of pathetic eloquence ever uttered by man. The occasion, the theme, the sentiments, the doctrines, the style, are all of the most exquisite kind, wholly suited to each other, and calculated to make the deepest impression on those who heard him. The elders of *the church of Ephesus*, to whom it was addressed, were ministers of the gospel, converts to Christianity made by himself, his own spiritual children, who owed to him, under God, their deliverance from endless sin and misery, and their attainment of endless holiness and happiness. They were endeared to him, as he was to them, by the tenderest of all possible ties; presiding over a church, formed in the capital of one of the principal countries in the world, at a period when heresy, contention, and dissoluteness were prophetically seen by him to be advancing with hasty strides to ruin Christianity in that region. This address was therefore delivered at a time when all that was dear to *him* or *them* was placed in the most imminent hazard of speedy destruction. *They* were the persons from whom almost all the exertions were to be expected which might avert this immense evil, and secure the contrary inestimable good; the shepherds, in whose warm affection, care, and faithfulness, lay the whole future safety of the flock. *He* was the apostle, by whom the flock had been gathered into the fold of Christ, and by whom the shepherds were formed, qualified, and appointed. He had now come for the great purpose of admonishing them of their own duty, and of the danger of the flock committed to their charge. He met them with the tenderness of a parent, visiting his children after a long absence. He met them for the last time. He assembled them to hear his last farewell on this side the grave.

To enforce their duty in the strongest manner, he begins his address with reminding them of his unan-

ner of life, his piety, faithfulness, zeal, tenderness for them, disinterestedness of conduct, fortitude under the severest sufferings, diligence in preaching the gospel, steady dependance on God, and entire devotion to the great business of the salvation of men. To them, as eye-witnesses, he appeals for the truth of his declarations. *Then* he charges solemnly, before God, to follow his example; warning them of approaching and accumulating evil, and commending them to the protection, and grace, and truth of God, for their present safety and future reward.

With this extensive, most solemn, and most impressive preparation, he closes his discourse, in a word, with the *great truth* which he wished to *enforce*, and the *great duty* which he wished to *enjoin*, as the sum and substance of all his instructions, precepts, and example; exhorting them to 'remember the words of the Lord Jesus, which he said, It is more blessed to give, than to receive.'

In no remains of Demosthenes or Cicero, can be found the same simplicity, address, solemnity, tenderness, and sublimity, united. Paul was a man immensely superior to either of these celebrated orators in excellence of character; and, with the aid of Christianity to influence, and inspiration to direct, rose to a height, and enlarged his views to an extent, of which no other man was ever capable. His eloquence, like the poetry of Isaiah, rises beyond every parallel; and the excellence of his disposition seconded in a glorious manner the greatness of his views, the tenderness of his sentiments, and the sublimity of his conceptions. He speaks as if he indeed possessed the tongue of angels; and the things which he utters are such, as angels, without superior aid, would never have been able to conceive.

'The words,' which he declares to have been spoken by the Saviour, are nowhere recorded in the Gospels, as having been uttered in the manner here specified. They were, however, unquestionably the words of Christ; and, not improbably, addressed to Paul himself. Be this as it may, they are words of

the highest possible import ; and may be justly considered as the language of all our Saviour's preaching, and of all his conduct. The spirit by which he was governed, they perfectly describe ; the actions which he performed, and the sufferings which he underwent, they perfectly explain. Of all his precepts they **are** a complete summary ; and of his whole character, as a moral being, they are a succinct, but full and glorious exhibition.

The import of them cannot be easily mistaken, unless from choice. ' To give,' is a universal description of *communicating good* ;—' to receive,' an equally extended description of *gaining it from others*. The former of these two kinds of conduct is pronounced here to be happier or ' more blessed' than the latter. To be ' blessed,' is to receive happiness from God, from our fellow-creatures, or from ourselves ; and denotes, therefore, *all the good* which we do now or shall hereafter enjoy. The doctrine of the text is, therefore, that

It is more desirable to communicate happiness, than to receive it from others.

I am aware that the selfishness which dwells in every human mind, and clouds every human intellect, as well as biasses every human decision concerning moral subjects, revolts at this doctrine. To admit it, is a plain condemnation of our ruling character, and a judicial sentence of reprobation on all our conduct. In a world of *selfish* beings, where one universal disposition reigns and ravages, it cannot but be expected by a man even moderately versed in human nature, that the general suffrage will be given in favour of the general character. Every man knows that his own cause is in question, and that his vote is an acquittal or condemnation of himself. From this interested tribunal an impartial issue cannot be hoped. In a *virtuous* world, instead of that proverbial and disgraceful aphorism, ' Where you find a man's interest, you find the man,' the nobler and more vindicable sentiment, ' We should find the man, where we find his duty,' would unquestionably prevail. If

the united voice of our race, therefore, should decide against this great evangelical doctrine, 'the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect,' may be easily expected to give their unqualified decision in its favour. In their happy residence a selfish being would be a prodigy, as well as a monster.

Even in our own world we may, however, lay hold on facts, which fully evince the doctrine to be possible. Parents are often found preferring the happiness of their children to their own personal and private good, and enjoying more satisfaction in communicating good to them, than in gaining it from the hands of others. Friends have frequently found their chief happiness in promoting the well-being of the objects of their friendship. *Patriots* have, sometimes at least, cheerfully forgotten all private concerns, and neglected the whole business of gaining personal gratification, for the sake of rendering important services to their beloved country. The apostles also, with a spirit eminently disinterested and heavenly, cheerfully sacrificed every private consideration for the divine purpose of accomplishing the salvation of their fellow-men. Nothing of this nature 'moved them; neither counted they their lives dear unto themselves, so that they might finish their course with joy, and the ministry which they had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.'

Now what forbids, what, I mean, in the nature of things, that, with an affection as tender and vigorous as parents feel for their children, and friends for their friends, which patriots have at times felt for their country, and which the apostles of Christ felt for the souls of their fellow-men, we should in a nobler state of existence escape from the bonds of selfishness, and send forth our good-will to every intelligent being whom we know, in such a manner as to take delight in the happiness of all around us, and to experience our first enjoyment in communicating good wherever we could find a recipient. That such

a disposition would be a desirable one, will not be disputed. Why may it not exist? What is there which will, of necessity, forbid such enlargement, excellency, and dignity of moral character? Why may not a world be filled with intelligent beings devoted to this great and godlike end, and gloriously exhibiting the image and beauty of their Creator? The only answer to these questions which an opponent can bring, is, that in this guilty, wretched world, the contrary spirit universally prevails. On the same ground, the tenants of a jail may rationally determine that the mass of fraud, theft, rape, and murder for which they are consigned to chains and gibbets, is the true and only character which exists in the palace of sovereignty, the hall of legislation, the household of piety, and the church of God!

Admitting, then, that such a disposition is possible, admitting that it has, at least in superior worlds, a real existence; admitting, still farther, as all who really believe the dictates of the gospel must admit, that it exists in every sincere Christian, even in *this* world; I proceed to establish ~~the~~ doctrine, by observing,

I. *That all the happiness which is enjoyed in the universe, flows originally from the voluntary activity of intelligent beings.*

All happiness is contrived, and is brought into existence by carrying that contrivance into execution. Intelligent beings alone can contrive or execute. From them, from their voluntary agency, therefore, all happiness springs. God, the GREAT INTELLIGENT, began this wonderful and immense work. Intelligent creatures, endued with the faculties necessary for this purpose, coincide with him, as instruments, in carrying on the vast design. On the part of him, or them, or both, it is the result of design. If happiness then is to exist at all, it must flow from disposition; and plainly from a disposition to do good. this, and a disposition to do evil, being the only active and productive principles in the whole nature of things. A disposition to gain happiness

from others, could plainly produce nothing ; and were there no other, the universe would be a blank, a desert, in which enjoyment could never be found. The capacity for it would indeed exist ; but the means of filling it would be wanting. The channels would open and wind ; but the living fountain, with which they were to be supplied, would be dry. The soil would be formed, and the seeds might be sown ; but the life-giving influence of the rain and the sunshine would be withholden. Of course, no verdure, flowers, nor fruits would spring up to adorn and enrich the immense and desolate surface.

As great therefore as the difference is between the boundless good which exists, and for ever will exist, in the great kingdom of Jehovah, and an absolute barrenness and dearth throughout this incomprehensible field, so great is the difference between these two dispositions.

II. *Virtue, the supreme excellence and glory of intelligent beings, is merely the love of doing good.*

No attribute of a rational nature is, probably, so much commended, even in this sinful world, as virtue ; yet the commendations given of it are, in many instances at least, unmeaning and confused ; as if those who extol it had no definite ideas of its nature, and knew not in what its real value consists.

All the worth of virtue, in my own view, lies in this ; that it is *the original, only voluntary, and universal source of happiness* ; partly as its affections are happy in themselves, and partly as they are the sources of all other happiness. There is, originally, nothing valuable, but *happiness*. The value of virtue consists only in its efficacy to produce happiness. This is its value in the Creator ; this its value in the creatures. Hence, and hence only, is virtue the ornament, the excellency, and the loveliness of intelligent beings.

Virtue, as exercised towards the *Creator*, is, as was shewn in a former Discourse, summed up in *love to him* ; in *benevolence, complacency, and gratitude* ; good-will to his supreme blessedness, and to the ac-

complishment of his glorious designs; a delight in his perfect character, which forms and accomplishes the boundless good of his creation; and a thankful reception and acknowledgment of the effects of his goodness, communicated either to ourselves, or to others. All these are affections in the highest degree active; and prompt us to study 'what we shall render to the Lord for his benefits,' and to co-operate with all our powers in the promotion of the designs which he has made known to us. All the good, indeed, which we can do to *him*, if it may be called by this name, is no other than to *please him*, by exhibiting always a disposition like his own. With this disposition he is ever delighted; and he has been pleased to inform us, that in his sight it is of 'great price.'

Virtue, as exercised towards our *fellow-creatures*, is the *same love* directed to them, and perfectly active in promoting their *well-being*.

In all the forms of justice, faithfulness, truth, kindness, compassion, charity, and forgiveness, in every act of self-denial and self-government, this is still the soul and substance. But virtue is a character, beyond comprehension superior to any other, and in a literal sense infinitely more desirable. It is the only worth, the only excellence, the only beauty of the mind; the only dignity, the only glory

To the spirit which is occupied in *gaining good* from others, or which aims at enjoyment merely, it is transcendently superior in numerous particulars.

It is the source of all internal, moral good.

The mind is a world of itself; in which happiness of a high and refined kind can exist; a happiness, without which external good can be of but little value. In the great business of forming happiness, its first concern is with itself. If disorder, tumult, and tempest reign within, order, peace, and serenity, from without, will find no admission. The first step towards real good is self-approbation. So long as the mind is necessitated to see itself deformed, odious, and contemptible—so long as the conscience

reproaches and stings ; so long as the affections are inordinate, base, insincere, rebellious, impious, selfish, and guilty ; so long as fraud is cherished, truth rejected, sin loved, and duty opposed--it is impossible, that quiet, consolation, or hope, should find a residence there. Self-condemned, self-abhorred, self-despised, it must fly of design from all conversation with itself, and find its poor and transient pleasure in the forgetfulness of what it is, and in the hurry and bustle of external employments and companions. From the sweet and peaceful fireside of harmonious and happy affections and purposes ; from the household serenity of a satisfied conscience, and of a blameless life, it is forced abroad, to seek without success to slake its thirst for happiness in streets and taverns, in routs and riots. Sickly, pained, and languishing, it looks for health and ease in medicines which cannot reach the disease and turns in vain for relief to sports and sounds, for which it has neither eye nor ear.

But when the love of doing good has once gained dominion over the man, he is become reconciled to his Creator, and to all his commands. This ruling disposition, wholly excellent and lovely in itself, is of course *seen* to be lovely and excellent. The conscience smiles with approbation on all the dictates of the heart. The mind becomes at once assured of its own amiableness and worth ; and, surveying the landscape within, beholds it formed of scenes exquisitely beautiful and desirable. The soul, barren and desolate before, is clothed, by the influence of the moral sun and the rain of heaven, with living verdure, and with blossoms and fruits of righteousness. All is pleasant, all is lovely to the eye. No tumult ruffles, no storm agitates. Peace soothes and hushes every disordered affection, and banishes every uneasy purpose ; and serenity, like the summer evening, spreads a soft and mild lustre over the cheerful region. Possessed of new and real dignity, and assuming the character of a rational being, the man for the first time enjoys *himself* ; and finds this enjoy-

ment not only new, but noble and expansive; and, while it furnishes perpetually varied and exquisite good, it sweetens and enhances all other good. From his happiness within, the transition to that which he finds without, is easy and instinctive. Of one part of this, himself is the immediate parent. When he surveys the objects to whom he has communicated happiness, by relieving their distresses, or originating their enjoyments, the first thing which naturally strikes his attention is, that *their happiness is the work of his own hands*. In the exalted character of a benefactor, a voluntary and virtuous benefactor, he surveys and approves himself, not with pride and self-righteousness, but with humble gratitude to God, for vouchsafing to raise him up to such exaltation and worth, and to make him a willing instrument in his hand of the good of his fellow-creatures.

In this character, the man who seeks happiness in *gaining* good has no share. A child of sense, a mere animal, his only business has been to taste and to swallow, while nobler and more active beings have been employed in producing the food on which he regales his appetite.

In this character of a common benefactor, the virtuous man is seen and acknowledged by others, as well as by himself. By all who see him he is approved, and by the wise and good he is beloved. Conscience owns his worth, virtue esteems and loves it, and the public testimony repeats and applauds it. To the world he is considered as a blessing; and his memory survives the grave, fragrant and delightful to succeeding generations.

In the mean time, those who are most unlike him in character pay an involuntary testimony to his worth. Whenever they seek esteem and commendation, they are obliged to profess his character, and so counterfeit his principles, to pretend to do good, and to seem to love the employment. In this conduct they unwillingly declare, that there is no honour and no worth, even in their view, beside that of which his character is formed.

In addition to these things, he is daily conscious of the approbation of God ; a privilege, a blessing, transcending all other blessings ; a good which knows no bounds of degree or duration. The proofs given of his approbation to this character are such as leave no room for doubt or question. It is, he has declared it to be, his own character. ' GOD IS LOVE. His law has demanded it, as the only article of obedience to himself. ' Love is the fulfilling of the law.' To this character, as formed in the soul through the redemption of Christ, all his promises are made. In consequence of the existence of this character, sin is forgiven, the soul justified, and the man adopted into the divine family, as a child of God and an heir of eternal life. Of the approbation of God, therefore, he is secure. Think, I beseech you, of the nature of this enjoyment. Think of the character of him who approves. Think what it is to be approved by infinite wisdom. What a seal of worth, what a source of dignity, what a foundation of honour ! How virtuous an ambition may be here gratified ! What an immense capacity for happiness may here be filled !

Beyond the grave his excellence will find a complete reward. There all around him will be wise and good, and will joyfully feel and acknowledge, will esteem and applaud his worth. Of their esteem and love the testimonies will be sincere, undisguised, unchanged, and eternal. There he will be acknowledged and welcomed as one of the virtuous and happy number who have voluntarily glorified God and befriended the universe, during their earthly pilgrimage, and who are destined to the same delightful employments, and to the same glorious character for ever. His heavenly Father will also there testify his own divine approbation in an open, full, and perfect manner ; will adorn him with every grace, remove from him every stain, and advance him through successive stages of excellence, which shall know no end.

It is the actual, and probably the necessary law of

intelligent nature, that we love those to whom *we do good*, more than those *who do good to us*. Thus God loves his intelligent creatures incomparably more than they can love him. Thus the Saviour loved mankind far more intensely than his most faithful disciples ever loved him. Thus parents regard their children with a strength of affection unknown in children towards their parents. Thus friends love those whom they have befriended, more than those who have befriended *them*. Thus also in other, and probably in all, cases. According to this undeniable scheme of things, he who seeks his happiness in doing good, is bound to his fellow-creatures, and to the universe, and will be eternally bound, by far stronger and tenderer ties than can otherwise exist. He will contemplate every fellow-creature primarily as an object of his own beneficence; and, while he feels a parental, a godlike attachment to all, will enjoy a delight in their prosperity, not unjustly styled divine. This glorious disposition will make the happiness of every being his own, as parents make that of their children. Even in this world he will thus multiply enjoyment, in a manner unknown to all others; and in the world to come will, in a progress for ever increasing and enlarging, find the most pure and exquisite delight springing up in his bosom, wherever he dwells, and wherever he roves. His mind, a bright and polished mirror, will receive the light of the Sun of righteousness, and of all the stars which adorn the heavenly firmament; and will, at the same time, warm and brighten within itself, and return the enlivening beams with undiminished lustre.

III. *To do good is the only and perfect character of the ever blessed Jehovah.*

When God created the universe it is most evident that he could have no possible view in this great work, but to glorify himself in doing good to the creatures which he made. Whatever they were, and whatever they possessed, or could ever be or possess, must of course be derived from him alone. From

them, therefore, he could receive nothing, but what he had given them. Accordingly, 'he is not worshipped as though he needed any thing; seeing he giveth unto all, life, and breath, and all things. The whole system of his designs and conduct is a mere system of communicating good; and his whole character, as displayed in it, is exactly summed up by the psalmist in these few words:--'Thou art good, and dost good, and thy tender mercies are over all thy works.' The same character was anciently proclaimed by himself to Moses, on mount Sinai, in that sublime and affecting annunciation; 'The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, slow to anger, and abundant in goodness and truth.' St. John has, in a still more comprehensive manner, declared his character in a single word; '*Göd is love.*' This peculiarly divine and glorious character was still more illustriously manifested by the Son of God, in the wonderful work of redemption. Infinitely 'rich' in all good himself, 'for *our sakes* he became poor, that we through him might become rich;' rich in holiness, rich in the happiness which it produces. We were fallen, condemned, and ruined; 'were poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked, and in want of all things.' To do good to us, to redeem us from sin, and to rescue us from misery, he came to this world; and while he lived, 'went about doing good' unto all men 'as he had opportunity,' and ended his life on the cross, that we might live for ever.

On the third day he arose from the dead, and ascended into heaven. At the right hand of God the Father, while he sits on the throne of the universe, he makes perpetual intercession for the sinful, back-sliding creatures whom he left behind, and with infinite benignity carries on the amazing work of redeeming love, in the world of glory. In that world it is his employment and delight to feed all his followers, and lead them to fountains of living waters; to enlighten them with wisdom, to improve them in virtue, to adorn them with strength and beauty, and

to dignify them with immortal glory.

All these things have flowed, and will for ever flow, from his own love of doing good. Of them, he could not possibly stand in need. 'Of the stones' of the street, he could 'raise up children' and followers, beyond measure better, wiser, and nobler than they are, and in numbers incomprehensible. For him they can do nothing; for them he does all things.

But God is infinitely blessed. This superior and unchangeable happiness of Jehovah springs entirely from this glorious disposition. As he can receive nothing, his happiness must lie wholly in the conscious enjoyment of his own excellence, which is formed of this disposition, and in the communication of good to his creatures.

If *we* would be happy like him, we must be disposed like him; must experience and exercise the same love of doing good, and must find our own supreme enjoyment in this exalted communication. Happiness grows out of the temper of the mind which enjoys. Its native soil is benevolence. When this is the temperature of the soul, it springs up spontaneously, and flourishes, and blossoms, and bears, with a rich and endless luxuriance, and with beauty supreme and transcendent; but when selfishness predominates, like an exotic in a sterile ground and a wintry climate, it withers, fades, and dies.

In the mean time, God loves and blesses those whose disposition and conduct resemble his own. In giving this character to his children, he gives them the first of all blessings, the source of peace, dignity and enjoyment within, and the means of relishing every pleasure from without. Thus, in the possession of this character, 'they have,' in the scriptural language; and therefore, 'to them' (in other respects) 'shall be' largely 'given.' Their internal excellence and enjoyment shall be perpetually improved, and their external happiness in the like manner extended. As the mind becomes more beneficent, more pure, more active in doing good, all the

sources of its felicity will multiply around it; its consciousness of being like its Father and Redeemer will expand and refine, virtuous beings will more clearly see, approve, and love its beauty and worth, and the smiles of infinite complacency will beam upon its character and conduct with inexpressible and transporting glory.

Having thus, as I flatter myself, shewn in a clear light the truth of the doctrine contained in the text, I shall now close the Discourse with two

REMARKS.

1. *This doctrine places in the strongest point of view the superiority of the gospel to every other system of morals.*

There are two classes of men, both very numerous, who have employed themselves in forming moral systems for mankind, viz. the ancient heathen philosophers, and modern infidels. It is hardly necessary to observe, that in all moral systems the supreme good, or highest interest of man, and, by consequence, the nature of virtue, and the nature and means of happiness, become, of course, prime objects of inquiry. Nothing can more effectually teach us the insufficiency of the human mind to determine the nature of the supreme good than the declaration of Varro, that ‘the heathen philosophers had embraced, within his knowledge, two hundred and eighty-eight different opinions concerning this subject.’ Nor were their sentiments concerning the nature of virtue and the nature and means of happiness, as will be easily supposed, at all more harmonious. Some of them taught, that sensual pleasure is the chief good of man; that it consists in freedom from trouble and pain; and that business and cares do not consist with happiness; and, therefore, that a man ought not to marry, because a family will give him trouble, nor engage in public business, nor meddle with the concerns of the public. They also taught, that nothing which is in itself pleasurable is an evil; and that when it is evil, it is so only because it brings

more trouble with it than pleasure ; that, therefore, injustice is not an evil in itself, but is evil merely on account of the trouble which it occasions to its author. Some of them placed their supreme happiness in pride, and personal independence of both gods and men. Apathy, or an absolute want of feeling with respect to our own troubles, and those of our fellow-men, was regarded as being essential to this independence. Some of them placed happiness in abstraction from the world, in study, in contemplation, in quietude of mind, in indolence of body, in seclusion from human society, in wealth, power, fame, superiority of talents, and military glory. Of virtue they appear to have formed no distinct or definite conceptions. In some instances, they spoke of it with propriety and truth ; but in others with such confusion, as to prove that they were without any correct and satisfactory apprehensions concerning its nature ; the several things which they taught being utterly inconsistent with each other. Different philosophers placed virtue in the love and pursuit of most of the things mentioned above ; and made it consist with injustice, impurity, impiety, fraud, falsehood, the desertion of parents in their old age, unkindness to children, insensibility to the distresses of our fellow-creatures, and generally with a dereliction of almost every thing which the Scriptures have declared to be virtuous.

These observations are sufficient to shew how infinitely remote these philosophers were from just conceptions concerning this inestimable subject.

Infidels have left this important concern of man substantially as they found it. I cannot at the present time attempt to repeat their various doctrines. It will be sufficient to observe, at the present time, that Mr. Hume, one of the last and ablest of them, has taught us in form, that modesty, humility, repentance of sin, and the forgiveness of injuries, are vices ; and that pride, therefore, impudence, resentment, revenge, and obstinacy in sin, are, by necessary consequence, virtues. This scheme needs no

comment. Virtue such as this would lay the world waste, and render him who possessed it a fiend.

From what a glorious height do the Scriptures look down on this grovelling, deformed, self-contradictory chaos of opinions! How sublime is the scheme which they exhibit concerning this amazing subject! Virtue, they inform us, is the love of *doing good*; an active principle, the real and whole energy of an intelligent mind, exerted for the exalted purpose of producing happiness. In the exertions of this principle, in the enjoyment which attends it, and in the happiness which it creates, the Scriptures place the supreme good of man, and of every other intelligent being. Here, and here only, is it placed with true wisdom, and immoveable certainty. The mind in this manner is happy within by its self-approbation, and without, by being in the highest degree useful to others, and by receiving from the hand of others all the good which the same usefulness in them can return to itself. Here all the provision which is either possible or desirable is made for enjoyment unmingled and complete. The character, the personal character, becomes glorious, the affections delightful, the conduct divine. In a community governed by this principle, every individual, however great, or however small, is honourable and lovely, both in his own sight, and that of others; every one is useful also; every one is happy.

2. *The great practical inference from this doctrine is, that doing good is the only proper employment of man.*

You, my friends and brethren, were created for this great purpose; not to gain reputation, learning, wealth, knowledge, power, honour, or pleasure; but to do good: not to gain even heaven itself, or immortal life; but to ascend to heaven, and to acquire immortal life, that in that happy world you may employ the immense of duration in an endless diffusion of beneficence, and an endless exercise of piety and praise. Make, then, the end for which God designed your existence and your faculties, the voluntary and proper end of all your wishes, designs, and labours.

With sober and affecting meditation set it before yourselves in form and system, as the purpose for which you were made, endowed, preserved, and blessed hitherto; as the purpose which is prescribed by the will of God, and as the purpose to which you are therefore voluntarily and supremely to devote yourselves. Let each of you say to himself, 'I was formed for the great and glorious purpose of doing good. This was the will of my Maker; it is my own supreme interest; it is the supreme interest of my fellow-creatures in me. Be this, then, the ultimate end of all my thoughts, wishes, and labours; and let nothing hinder me from pursuing it always. While I lawfully seek for reputation, property, learning, eloquence, power, or any other earthly good, I am resolved to seek them only in subordination to this great purpose, as means merely to this end. To form and to execute this resolution, give me grace, wisdom, and strength, O thou Father of all mercies! that I may perform thy holy will, and in some measure resemble thy perfect and glorious character, through Jesus Christ. Amen.'

This solemn proposition of the subject to yourselves would almost of course give it a distinction and importance in your view, which would induce you to keep it supremely and habitually in sight, and render it a standard, to which all your conduct would be referred for approbation or rejection; a moral scale, by which you would measure every thought and pursuit; a touchstone, by which you would distinguish every species of alloy from the most fine gold. It would also direct your aims to a higher mark, and give your efforts a nobler character. Men usually, even good men, rather compound in their affections with conscience and the Scriptures for a mixture of worldliness and virtue, than insist on observing nothing but the dictates of virtue. They aim at being virtuous, and not at being only and eminently virtuous. One reason for this is, they take it for granted that they shall never cease to sin in the present world, and therefore never mistrust ei-

ther how practicable or how important it is that they should vigorously determine to avoid all sin, and practise nothing but virtue. Their designs are divided between their worldly business and religion. These they consider as two separate and, in a degree, incoherent objects, both necessary, but still clashing; when they ought to consider their worldly business merely as one great dictate and duty of religion, one great branch of the virtue which they are to exhibit, and of the good which they are to do. Worldly business is to be done; but it is to be done only as a part of our religion and duty. Even our amusements are always to be regarded in this manner; and are useful and lawful only as parts of our duty, and as means of enabling us better to perform other duties of higher importance. From exact obedience to the great rule, 'whether ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God,' there is no exemption.

Were the solemn proposition which I have urged to be formed and habitually kept in sight, the character of man would soon be, not sinless indeed, but incomparably more holy, blameless, and undefiled than we now usually find it. Human virtue would be less clouded, would assume a brighter and more celestial aspect, and would be gilded with a clearer and more genial sunshine.

In whatever sphere of life you are placed, employ all your powers, and all your means, of doing good as diligently and vigorously as you can. Direct your efforts to the well-being of those who are within your reach, and not to the inhabitants of a distant age or country, of a future generation, or of China or Peru. Neglect not a humble kind office within your power, for a vast and sublime one which you cannot accomplish. The Scriptures require you to feed the hungry and to clothe the naked, to instruct the ignorant and reclaim the vicious. Philosophical philanthropy calls to the commiseration of nations, the overthrow of governments, the improvement of the vast society of man, and the exaltation of this

wretched world to freedom, science, and happiness. The only objection to your labouring in this magnificent field seems to be, that your labours will be to no purpose. On the scriptural plan, you will at least do something; and your two mites will not be forgotten. Extend your efforts, however, as far as you can extend them to any effect, to as many and as great objects as providence places within your reach, and as many ways as you shall find in your power. Promote, as much as possible, relief, comfort, health, knowledge, virtue, and happiness, both as private and public objects. Promote them by your talents, your property, your influence, your labours, and your example. Let every day, when passing in review before the scrutinizing eye of conscience, present a regular series of beneficence, which will soften the bed of your repose, and rise as a sweet memorial before God.

As objects of your kindness always select the *most deserving*. The Scriptures have directed you to 'do good unto all men, and especially to those of the household of faith.' To the soundness of this precept common sense bears also the fullest attestation. It was reserved for philosophy to discern, that the true and proper scenes of employing benevolence were the galley and the jail; and that its chief aim should be not to make men good and virtuous, but to prevent thieves, murderers, and traitors, from coming to the dungeon or the gibbet which they had merited. Let your favourite object be the honest, the industrious, the sober, the virtuous; and both feel and relieve their distresses. Refuse not others, but give to these a universal preference. When you relieve the sufferings of the vicious and infamous, close your beneficence with solemn reproof, and pungent counsel; and remember, if you withdraw them from vice to virtue, you render them a kindness infinitely greater than if you elevate them to wealth and honour. In this way you will 'save a soul from death, and cover a multitude of sins.'

With all your resolutions and efforts, you will

need every day assistance from God. Every day ask it in humble, fervent prayer. No real blessing ever descends to man, but as an answer to prayer. Particularly this rich and glorious blessing of a life patiently spent in well-doing, cannot be expected unless it be asked for. Three times a day retire with Daniel to your chambers. God will be there, and will grant you a glorious 'answer of peace.'

To such a life can you want motives? Let me remind you that it is, and I flatter myself it has been proved to be, not only *the most honourable*, but the *only honourable* character; the character which secures the secret approbation of those who do not assume it, and the open esteem, love, and praise of those who do; that it is the only character which is truly and eminently happy, which possesses peace within and enjoyment without; which is found in heaven, and constitutes the happiness of that exalted world; that it is the character of angels, of Christ, and of God; the beauty of the divine kingdom, the glory of Jehovah, and the source of all the good which is enjoyed in immensity and eternity.

It is the only character which will *endure*,—'The world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he who doeth the will of God abideth for ever.' 'The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,' the wretched inventory of a selfish, worldly mind, find all their poor, though boasted, gratifications on this side of the grave. Their miserable possessors riot, and dig, and climb, during their passing day, and then vanish, and are seen no more; where will they next be found?

He, on the contrary, 'who, by patient continuance in well-doing hath sought for glory, honour, and immortality,' will lie down in the bed of peace, will 'fall asleep in the Lord Jesus,' and awake with new life, and joy, and glory, beyond the grave. In the great trial, he will be found and pronounced to have 'well done,' and to have been 'a good and faithful servant' of his divine Master; and will be directed to 'enter into the joy of his Lord.'

In the great and final day he will be acquitted, acknowledged, and glorified, before the assembled universe; because, when the least of Christ's brethren was 'an hungered, he gave him meat; when he was thirsty, he gave him drink; when he was a stranger, he took him in; when he was naked, he clothed him; when he was sick, and in prison, he ministered unto him.' Of so high and valuable a nature will he find this beneficence, that it will be received and rewarded by Christ, as done to himself. To heaven he will be an acceptable inhabitant, and meet with an open and 'abundant entrance' into that happy world. Glorified saints will there hail him as their brother: angels will welcome him as their companion. There also will he find that he has begun a career of excellence which will never end. Endued there with stronger principles and nobler powers, in a happier field, with more desirable companions, and forming all his plans of beneficence for eternal duration, he will fill up the succession of ages with a glorious and immortal progress of doing good; and become daily a brighter, a more perfect, a more divine ornament and blessing to the virtuous universe.

And now, my friends and brethren, 'I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up' in this evangelical character, 'and to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified.' **Amen.**

SERMON XCVIII.

THE LAW OF GOD.

THE SECOND GREAT COMMANDMENT.

THE EFFECTS OF BENEVOLENCE ON PUBLIC
HAPPINESS.

I have shewed you all things, how that, so labouring, ye ought to support the weak ; and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give, than to receive.—ACTS xx. 35.

IN a preceding Discourse I considered at length the influence of a disposition to do good on *the personal* happiness of him in whom it exists ; and attempted to shew, that this disposition is more productive than any other of such happiness. It is now my design to prove, that it possesses a no less superior efficacy in producing *public* happiness : or the happiness of *society* in all its various forms.

Of this disposition, commonly styled *disinterested benevolence*, and denoted in the New Testament by the word, *Αγαπη*, rendered in our translation *love*, and *charity*, we have an extensive, most accurate, and most beautiful description, in the thirteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. In this chapter it is exhibited to be superior to every natural and supernatural endowment, and to every acquisition made by man. It is proved to be the source of all good, natural and moral ; or rather the source of all natural, and the substance of all moral good. It is shewn to be the only real excellence of intelligent creatures ; the means of their existence and their continuance in the kingdom of God and the only cause of his complacency in their character. Finally, it is declared, that this disposition shall endure until all other things which are admired and esteemed by men, shall be forgotten ; and, when they shall have ceased, together with their use

and importance, shall brighten and flourish for ever

Generally, it is declared, if I mistake not, in this chapter, that love, in its various modifications and exercises, is the amount of all those which are commonly called the graces of the Christian spirit; or, as they are often styled, the Christian virtues. Particularly, it is exhibited to us as long-suffering, contentment, modesty, humility, decency, disinterestedness, meekness, charitableness, hatred of iniquity, love to truth, patience, faith, hope, and fortitude. With this, the most extended and the most detailed account of the subject furnished by the Scriptures, all the other exhibitions contained in the sacred volume perfectly agree. In them all, when connected together by the mind, as may without difficulty be perceived, this great truth is abundantly shewn; viz. that the love of the gospel, or the spirit of doing good, is the source of all happiness, public and private; and is productive, intentionally, of no unnecessary evil.

This truth is generally, but forcibly, taught in the text, with regard to society, as well as with regard to individuals. If we remember that all societies are composed of individuals, we cannot hesitate to admit, that whatever renders them happy must, in exactly the same manner and degree, be the source of public happiness. If 'it is more blessed to give, than to receive;' if it is more blessed to cherish a spirit of *doing good to others*, than a disposition to *gain it from them*, in individual instances; the community in which this disposition universally reigneth could not fail to enjoy this superior happiness in its fullest extent.

Equally manifest is it, that the same disposition could not be productive of evil. 'Love,' saith St. Paul, 'worketh no ill to his neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.' In other words, this great and glorious characteristic of love, that it is productive of no ill, rendered it an object of such excellence to the view of God, that he framed his law in such a manner, as to require nothing of his

intelligent creatures beside this attribute, and its proper exercises. We are not indeed to suppose this the only reason why the divine law was framed in this manner. The good, of which this disposition is the *parent*, was, as we are abundantly taught in the Scriptures, a commanding reason also, why it was required by the law of God. To secure this good, and prevent in this manner the existence of the evil, which would necessarily result from any other disposition, was, at the same time, supremely glorious to the infinite lawgiver.

It cannot fail of being an interesting employment to a Christian assembly, to contemplate the operations of this spirit upon human society. In the progress of such contemplation, so many blessings will rise up to our view, and will be so easily seen to flow necessarily from this disposition, that we cannot fail to feel deeply the degraded, mischievous, miserable nature of that selfishness, which is so directly contrasted to it, and which so generally controls the affections and conduct of man. With scarcely less strength shall we realize also the excellence and amiableness of that spirit, from which good so extensively flows; which makes heaven the residence of supreme enjoyment, and which might make even this melancholy world no unworthy resemblance of heaven.

On a theme, so extensive as this, and comprehending such a vast multitude of particulars, it would be easy to make many important observations. Those which fall within the compass of my design must, however, be all included within the limits of a single Discourse. They will therefore be few, and of necessity general.

I. *Evangelical love, or the spirit of communicating happiness will, of course, induce us to be contented with our own providential allotments.*

‘Love,’ saith St. Paul, ‘envieth not.—Love seeketh not her own.’

It is easily demonstrated by reason, as well as abundantly declared in the Scriptures, that the in-

finitely wise and benevolent God orders all things aright. 'Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might: let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this; that we understandeth and knoweth me; that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.' With such a government as this, it is evident, all persons ought to be satisfied; for all persons clearly ought to wish, that that which is righteous, wise, and benevolent, should be invariably done. He who is dissatisfied, therefore, cannot, without voluntary blindness, fail to discern, that in this temper he is guilty of sin. At the same time, the good man is taught, and will, from interest and duty, alike remember, that 'all things work together for good to them that love God;' and, therefore, for good to him, as being one of this happy number. Such a man, with this conviction, must be contented of course. His understanding, prepared always to admit the dictates of truth, and his heart, always ready to welcome them, demand and generate a contented spirit. In such a man, discontentment with his own situation, and envy on account of the superior enjoyments of others, can find no place, unless when 'the law in the members, warring against the law of the mind, brings him into captivity.' Were his love, therefore, perfect, his contentment would be also perfect.

The importance of this disposition to the happiness of man, may be advantageously illustrated by calling up to our view the immense evils which spring from discontentment. How vast is their number, how terrible their nature! What hatred does it generate towards our fellow-creatures, what wrath, what contention, what revenge! How many slanders does it produce, how many frauds! What a multitude of perjuries, litigations, murders, and wars! What a mass of guilt does it create! What an accumulation of misery! Were the great men of this world alone

to be satisfied with the wealth, splendour, and power, allotted to them ; were they to thirst no more for the enjoyments bestowed on their rivals, the whole face of this earthly system would, in a great measure, be changed. Oppression would break his iron rod, and war would cease to ravage the habitations of men.

In producing these evils, it is impossible for a mind governed by the spirit of doing good to take any share. Such a mind must of necessity rejoice in the righteous and benevolent dispensations of God. All these it would regard, as springing from his perfect character, and as accomplishing his perfect designs. Its own allotments, therefore, it would consider as the best possible, upon the whole, for the time and the circumstances, because they were determined by this wisdom and goodness. If a man possessed of such a mind were afflicted, he would 'not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when he was rebuked of him ;' but he would remember, that 'whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth ; and' that he 'scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.' In this character of a son, with filial affection and reverence to 'the Father of his spirit,' while thus employed in the eminently parental office of chastising him for his good, he would sustain his afflictions with patience, fortitude, and submission ; would endeavour to derive, and would certainly derive, from them 'the peaceable fruits of righteousness.' His mind would become more and more serene, patient, and enduring, more sensible of his dependance on God, more resigned to his disposal, and more intimately possessed of 'fellowship with the Father, and his Son, Jesus Christ.' Every day, and by means of every affliction, he would become more weaned from the world, more spiritually-minded, less dependant for his happiness on outward objects, and more effectually sustained by the peace and joy of the gospel. In such a mind passion would daily lose its inordinate and mischievous dominion, and reason, conscience, and piety, daily increase theirs. The views and feelings which assi-

milate him to an animal would gradually lessen, and those which constitute him a rational being continually increase. The distinction in the scale of moral existence for which he was originally formed, he would gradually acquire, and in the end would find himself an inhabitant of heaven, fitted by a wholesome discipline for an immediate participation of its pure and unfading enjoyments.

In prosperity, the same man would acknowledge God as the giver of all his blessings. The enjoyments allotted to him, he would regard, not as acquired from his Maker by bargain and sale, purchased by works which himself had wrought, and earned by his own industry and ingenuity, but as gifts, descending from the Author of all good, as sovereign and merciful communications from the eternal Benefactor. To this Benefactor all his affections, prayers, and praises would ascend; and the character, which this glorious Being would sustain in the view of such a mind, would be the proper and transcendent character of Jehovah.

It is the lot of all men to be, more or less, injured by their fellow-men. In the sufferance of these injuries most men become impatient, angry, and revengeful, and usually look no farther, while smarting under the infliction, than to the hand from which it is immediately derived. But such a mind will remember, that the injuries done by men are also providential chastisements from God, directed by the highest wisdom, and accomplishing the most desirable purposes. However untoward, therefore, however painful, his sufferings may seem for a season; he will consider them chiefly as necessary parts of a perfect providence, and as real though mysterious means of accomplishing perfect good. In this view they will appear comparatively light, and will be sustained with equanimity, and even with comfort. The promises of the gospel, ever present and ever fresh, will steadily furnish additional and abundant consolation. In these he will find his own good secured beyond defeat; and will 'both hope

and quietly wait for the salvation of God.' Fashioned and tempered in this manner into submission, patience, and meekness, 'the work of righteousness will (in such a mind) be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness, and assurance for ever.'

In this vast particular, therefore, extending to so many objects, spreading its influence over all the days and hours of life, man would gain beyond measure by assuming this divine disposition. The spirit of doing good would be in his bosom 'a well of water, flowing out unto everlasting life.' The delightful nature of benevolent affections, the animating enjoyment inherent in beneficence, would gild with sunshine the gloom of affliction, and add new beauty and splendour to seasons of prosperity. Towards God it would be exercised in the whole course of diversified obedience, particularly in complacency and gratitude, reverence and resignation; the proper efforts of a good mind to 'render to him according to his benefits.' Towards man it would operate in the production of happiness, and the relief of distress; the employment of God himself, and peculiarly the source of his own infinite happiness. Thus would it unceasingly do good and gain good; and, while he who was the subject of it diffused enjoyment through his own bosom, he would extend 't also to all around him.

It has doubtless been observed, that I have illustrated this subject hitherto, by applying it to the circumstances of *an individual*. It is hardly necessary to remark, that what is thus true of one man must be equally true of all others who are governed by the same spirit. This contentment therefore this serenity, this exquisite enjoyment, would, if such a disposition universally prevailed, be felt by a whole community, and diffused over the world. Every man would thus act, thus gain, thus enjoy. What a mass of happiness would in this manner be accumulated, and how would the darkness of this melancholy world be changed into a glorious resemblance of everlasting day!

III. *The same spirit would do justice to all men.*

‘Love rejoiceth not in iniquity.’

Justice is either *commutative*, or *distributive*. *Commutative* justice is rendering an *equivalent* for what we receive, whether of property, or kind offices. *Distributive* justice is the rendering of such *rewards* as are due to those who obey law and government, and of such *punishments* as are due to those who disobey and rebel. In both senses, justice is the mere measure of *benevolence*. What a change would be wrought in this world by an exact fulfilment of commutative justice only! With what astonishment should we see every debt paid at the time and in the manner in which it was due;—every promise faithfully fulfilled;—every loan of money, utensils, or other property, returned without injury or delay;—every commodity sold according to its real value, and that value truly declared;—every character carefully and justly defended, and none unjustly attacked;—every kindness gratefully felt, and exactly requited! How great a part of human corruptions would cease! How great a part of the customary litigations would be swept away! What a multitude of prosecutions would vanish! What a host of hard bargains, cheats, and jockies would be driven from among men! How soon would the judge find himself enjoying a comparative sinecure, and the jail crumble into ruin for want of inhabitants!

But this mighty change would be still increased by the reign of distributive justice. In its laws, the legislature would regard only the good of its subjects; in his decisions, the judge, and in his administrations the executive magistrate, would be governed by the same great and general interest. Of course, laws would be usefully formed, and equitably administered; and the public peace, approbation, and prosperity, would be uniformly secured.

To the government, the people at large would willingly render the same justice, as being influenced by the same principle. Justice, in an important sense, is due from the people to their rulers; and

can be either rendered, or denied. When rendered, much good, and when denied, much evil is always done to the community. If the benevolence of the gospel governed men of all classes, this justice would be rendered cheerfully, and universally. Strong in the public confidence, rulers would be at full liberty to devise and to pursue every useful measure, without danger of slander or opposition, without faction or tumult. The community would be a great and happy family, peaceful, harmonious, and safe; and at the head of it, magistrates would be the common parents, actuated by no design, and busied in no employment, but to render themselves as useful and the people as happy as was in their power. How different such a nation from those that have hitherto existed in this tumultuous world!

III. *The same spirit would invariably speak truth.*

‘Love,’ saith St. Paul, ‘rejoiceth in the truth.’

Truth is the basis of society in all worlds where society exists. Angels could not be social without it. Thieves and robbers support their dreadful social state by speaking it to each other. To be social beings at all, we must exercise confidence. But we cannot confide where truth is not spoken. Lying in all its forms is the gangrene of society, and corrupts the mass just so far as it spreads. The sense of falsehood is a sense of danger, a sense of danger is distress. Suspicion, jealousy, hatred, malignant designs, and the dreadful execution of those designs, grow successively out of deception. Under the united dominion of these evils, the mind in which they exist becomes gradually a seat of woe, a haunt of dreadful passions and dreadful expectations. In the progress of intellectual nature, a world of beings thus situated would be a collection of fiends, and convert their residence into a hell. On this globe, where much truth is spoken, and where falsehood is only mixed, where the spirit and the art of deceiving are imperfect, a great part of our sufferings as well as of our sins is formed by violations of truth.

What a mighty and glorious change would at once

be accomplished in the circumstances of mankind, were truth to become their only and universal language! Were no false facts hereafter to be declared, no false arguments to be alleged, no false doctrines to be taught, no false pretensions to be made, no false friendships to be professed, and no false colourings to be employed, to discourage and deform truth, what a host of villains would vanish! What a multitude of impositions, treacheries, and distresses would fade out of the picture of human woe?

To realize the nature and extent of this mighty change, cast your eyes for a moment over the face of this melancholy world. Behold all the interests of man exposed, and hazarded; his peace invaded, his purposes frustrated, his business ruined, and his hopes blasted, by the various votaries of falsehood; his private affairs molested by lying servants, his friendship abused by treacherous friends, his good name dishonoured by slanderous neighbours, his learning and science perverted by philosophists, his rights and privileges wrested from him by fraudulent governments, and his salvation prevented by religious impostors. How immense is the abuse which he suffers; how comprehensive, how minute, spreading every where, and reaching to every thing which is important, which is dear, to the heart! Thieves and robbers conceal and accomplish their malignant invasions of property and happiness under the darkness of midnight, and fly with terror and haste the detecting eye of day. The wretches of whom I have spoken shroud themselves in moral darkness, and equally dread the exploring beams of truth. Were this glorious light of the universe to burst the clouds which envelope our darkened world, and exhibit in clear and distinct view all things as they are, what a host of enemies, what a crowd of spectres, would fly from the dreadful detection! See the *tale-bearer*, hurrying from the indignant hisses of those whom he has pierced into the innermost parts of the soul! The *perjurer* shrinks from the abhorrence of those sacred tribunals of justice which his enormous guilt

has dishonoured and defiled ; and trembles at the expected infliction of that divine wrath which he has impiously invoked. The *liar* sneaks from the haunts of man ; while infamy pursues his flight with her hiss of contempt, and her whip of scorpions. The *sophist* immures himself in his cell, amid the foul animals who are its proper inhabitants ; while justice inscribes over the entrance, ‘ Here is buried the betrayer of the souls of men.’ The *seducer*, loathed, execrated, torn by a frenzied conscience, and wrung with remorse and agony, hurries out of sight, to find his last refuge among his kindred fiends. Behind them, the whole train of deceivers, appalled and withered, vanish from the searching beams ; and sink down to the regions of darkness and despair. The earthly creation, which ‘ has groaned, and travailed in pain together, until now,’ under the vast miseries which these enemies of God and men have wrought wherever they have roamed, is lightened of the insupportable burden. The gloom disappears, and universal nature smiles to behold ‘ its redemption drawing nigh.’ Tribunals of justice are purified at once. Individuals, families, and neighbourhoods feel their wounds close, their breaches vanish, and their peace return. Religion rides in triumph through the world, and God is pleased to dwell anew among men.

Think not that I am too ardent in this representation. Falsehood is the first enemy of intelligent beings. The world was ruined, the human race were murdered, at first by a *lie*. ‘ The father of lies,’ is the appropriate title of the worst of all beings ; title of supreme and eternal infamy, branded by the Almighty hand. All the deceivers who have followed in his train partake of his character ; are slaves, self-sold to toil in his foul and malignant drudgery, and heirs of his undying infamy and woe. ‘ There shall in nowise enter into the city any thing that defileth, or that loveth or maketh a lie ;’ but on the contrary, ‘ all liars shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.’

Truth, on the other hand, is the foundation on which rests the moral universe, the stability of the divine kingdom, the light of heaven, the glory of Jehovah. The truth is one of the peculiar names of him, 'who is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person.' Truth is the great bond which unites angels to each other, and to their God; the chain which binds together the intelligent system, preserving all the parts in harmony and beauty, and arranging the worlds of which it is composed around the great centre of light happiness, and glory.

IV. *From the same disposition would spring universally those kind offices which are its immediate offspring, and which constitute the peculiar amiableness of intelligent beings.*

'Love suffereth long, and is kind.'

The interchanges of conduct between such beings are in their nature and variety endless. From *inferiors* to *superiors*, they assume the names of our veneration, homage, respect, reverence, submission, and obedience, together with many others of the same general nature. From *superiors* to *inferiors*, they are in the like manner varied through all the shades of authority, government, precept, regard, countenance, favour, compassion, forgiveness, instruction, advice, reproof, and a great variety of similar offices. Between *equals*, they are performed in the more familiar, but not less necessary acts of friendship, esteem, civility, giving, lending, aiding, and a multitude of others. These united, constitute a vast proportion of all that excellence of which intelligent beings are capable, and of all that duty for which they are designed by their Creator. To enjoyment, kindness is no less necessary than truth and justice. Truth begins, justice regulates, and kindness finishes rational happiness. Truth is the basis, justice the measure, and kindness the substance. All are alike and absolutely indispensable; and of all benevolence is the soul the essence, the amount.

A world of kindness is a copy of heaven. A

world without kindness is an image of hell. Eden originally derived its beauty and glory from the kind and amiable character of its inhabitants; and the verdure, the bloom, the splendour of all its ornaments were merely a faint resemblance of the beauty of mind, the moral life and loveliness which glowed in our first parents. Had they preserved this character, the world would still have continued to flourish with immortal life and beauty, and the character itself would have furnished one natural and desirable ingredient in the happiness of beings like them, who by the nature of their dispositions were capable of being happy.

Were the same character to revive in the present inhabitants of the world, now in ruins around us, the bloom and beauty of paradise would spontaneously return. Three-fourths of the miseries of man are made by himself, and of these a vast proportion is formed by his unkindness. Were this malignant character banished, were sweetness and tenderness of disposition to return to the human breast, and benevolence once more to regulate human conduct, a lustre and loveliness hitherto unknown would be spread over the inanimate creation. and God would supply to our enjoyment all which would then be lacking.

In the exercise of this disposition, parents would be truly kind to their children, and would labour, not to gratify their pride, avarice, and sensuality, but to do them real and universal good; to form their minds to virtue and happiness, to obedience and endless life, to excellence and loveliness in the sight of God. In the path of this true wisdom they would walk before, and their offspring, following cheerfully after them, would find it to be only pleasantness and peace. Brothers and sisters, under this happy influence, would become brothers and sisters indeed. In their hearts and on their tongues would dwell the law of kindness' to each other, and of piety to their parents. Every son would 'make a glad father;' no daughter would be 'a heaviness to her

mother.' Every returning day would assume the peace and serenity of the sabbath, and every house would be converted into a little heaven.

From the house, this expansive disposition would enlarge the circuit of its benefactions, so as to comprehend the neighbourhood. Happy within, every family would delight to extend its happiness to all without, who are near enough to know and to share its kind offices. The beams of charity would shine from one habitation to another, and every hamlet and village would be formed into a constellation of beauty and splendour. Peace, the sister of *Love* and *Joy*, the third in that delightful family, would be constant visitants at every fireside, and spread their smiles and their influence over every collection of human dwellings.

To the poor, the wanderer, and the stranger, every door would be open to invite them in; every heart would welcome their entrance; and every hand to relieve their wants and distresses. The rich would be rich only to bless; and the poor would be poor only to be blessed. The great would employ their ten talents in gaining more, and the small, their one talent in the same honourable and profitable exchange. Kings and rulers would be, indeed, what they have been styled, but in many instances without a claim to the character, the Fathers of their country. The iron rod of oppression would be finally broken and cast away, and the golden sceptre of love, and peace, and charity would be extended for the encouragement and relief of all who approached. Bribery, intrigue, caballing, and the whole train of public corruptors, would be hissed out of the habitations of men; and the courts of rulers become, not the scenes of guilt and mischief, but the residence of honour, dignity, and evangelical example.

Nor would this great 'bond of perfectness' merely unite the members of a single community with each other; but, extending its power, like the attraction of the sun, would join all nations in one common union of peace and good-will. No more would the

trumpet summon to arms ; no more would the beacon kindle its fires, to spread the alarm of invasion ; no more would the instruments of death ' be furnished against the day of battle.' ' The sword' would be literally ' beaten into a ploughshare, and the spear into a pruning-hook ; nation would no more lift up sword against nation, nor kingdom against kingdom ; neither would they learn war any more.' The human wolf, forgetting all his native ferocity, would cease to thirst for the blood of the lamb ; and cruelty, slaughter, and desolation, to lay waste the miserable habitations of men. The walls, within and without which violence resounded and ravaged, would be called ' Salvation ;' and the gates, before which destruction frowned at the head of an invading host, would be surnamed ' Praise.'

V. *The same disposition would manifest itself in universal and unceasing piety to God.*

The infinite mind is the infinite benefactor of the universe. As the source and centre of all existence, as the great benefactor of all beings ; as the subject of divine blessedness, and excellence, God would be regarded by such a disposition with supreme benevolence and complacency. *Piety* is nothing but this disposition, directed to this great and glorious Being. The *love*, which is the fulfilling of the second command of the moral law, is also perfect obedience to the first, which is like unto the second. Without *love*, *fear* becomes a base and pernicious passion, totally destitute of amiableness and excellency ; united with love, or in a mind where love reigns, it is changed into the sublime character of *reverence*, the proper and filial regard to God from his children. *Dependence* without love is nothing. Without love, *confidence* cannot exist ; *hope* and *joy* equally spring from it ; *gratitude* is but one manner in which it is exercised.

He who loves his neighbour on any account with the benevolence of the gospel, will, and must, of course, love his Creator. If he exercises evangelical confidence at all, he cannot but exercise it supremely

in God. If he be grateful to a human benefactor, he must be, beyond measure, more grateful to the divine Benefactor. If he love moral excellence at all, he must, more than in all other excellence, delight in that which glows with unceasing glory in the eternal mind.

In God, therefore, this desirable disposition would find the highest object of all its attachments, the supreme end of all its conduct. To him the devotion of such a spirit would be complete, unceasing, and endless. To please, obey, and glorify him would be the instinctive and the commanding aim of the man in whom it was found, and, in the case supposed, in all men. All men would be changed into children of God. The earth would become one universal temple, from which prayer, and praise, and faith, and love, would ascend before the throne of God and the Lamb every morning and every evening. Time, hitherto a period of sense and sin, of impiety and rebellion, would be converted into a universal sabbath of peace and worship. 'Holiness to the Lord,' would be written on all the pursuits and employments of mankind. 'Zion, the city of our God,' would extend its walls from the rising to the setting sun, and comprehend all the great family of Adam within its circuit; while on its gates would be inscribed in immortal characters, 'JEHOVAH IS HERE.'

Let me now ask, whether the love of the gospel, the spirit of doing good, is not in the view of all who hear me a disposition more desirable than the present disposition of man? Think what the world now is, and what, since the apostasy, it ever has been. Call to mind the private wretchedness, guilt, and debasement which, within and without you, deform the human character, and destroy human happiness. Call to mind the public sins which have blackened the world from the beginning, and the public miseries, which have rung with groans and shrieks throughout the whole reign of time, and from one end of heaven to the other. What a vast proportion of these evils has man created for himself and his

fellow-creatures ! How small a proportion has God created ! and how mild and proper a punishment has this been for the authors of the rest ! Of this complication of guilt and woe every man is, in some degree, the subject and the author. All men are daily employed in complaining of others ; and none almost in reforming themselves. Were each individual to begin the task of withdrawing from the common mass the evils which *he* occasions, the work would be easily done. Those produced by men would be annihilated, and those occasioned by God would cease ; because, where there were no transgressions, God would not exercise his ‘ strange work’ of punishment.

How mighty would be the change ! Benevolence would take place of malignity, friendship of contention, peace of war, truth of falsehood, and happiness of misery. This dreary world would become a paradise. The brutal, deformed character of man would give place to the holiness and dignity of angels ; and all the perplexed, melancholy, and distressing scenes of time would assume the order, beauty, and glory of the celestial system.

With the nature and effects of the present human character, the selfishness of man, so fondly, proudly, and obstinately cherished by every human breast, you are all, at least in some degree, acquainted. It is scarcely necessary that I should recall to your minds the universal corruption of the *antediluvian* world, and the violence and pollution which rendered this earth too impure and deformed to be any longer seen by the perfect eye of Jehovah. It is scarcely necessary to remind you of the premature apostasy which followed the deluge ; the brutal idolatry which, like a cloud from the bottomless pit, darkened this great globe to the four ends of heaven ; the putrid infection which tainted Sodom and Gomorrah ; the rank and rotten growth of sin, which poisoned and destroyed the nations of Canaan ; the deplorable defections of Israel and Judah ; the bloody oppressions of Assyria, Babylon, and Persia ; the mon-

strous ambition and wild ravages of Alexander ; the base treacheries and deformed cruelties of his followers , the iron-handed plunder, butchery, and devastation of Rome ; the terrible ravages of Mohammed and his disciples ; or the fearful waste of man by Alaric, Attila, and their barbarous companions in slaughter. As little necessity is there to detail the wars and ruins of modern Europe ; the massacres of the Romish hierarchy, the tortures of the Inquisition, the absolutions and indulgences issued from the Vatican, to pardon sin, and to sanction rebellion against God. Your minds must be familiarized to the lamentable degradation, the amazing miseries, the death-like slavery of the nations which fill the continent of Africa. You cannot be unacquainted with the swinish brutism of the Chinese ; the more brutal deformity, the tyger-like thirst for blood of the Hindoos, and of the strangers who have successively invaded Hindostan ; the fell and fiend-like cruelty that has made modern Persia a desert ; the stupid but furious superstition, and the tainted impurity of Turkey. To these monstrous corruptions, these wonderful sins of nations claiming generally the name of civilized, add the crimes of the savage world ; and fasten your eyes for a moment on the wolfish rage which reigns and riots in the human animals prowling regularly for blood and havoc around the deserts of America and Asia ; and you will be presented with an imperfect, but, for my purpose, a sufficient exemplification of the spirit which rules the heart of man, and actuates the vast family of Adam.

But this spirit is unnecessary to man. The disposition which I have described might just as easily inform the mind and control the conduct. We might as easily be benevolent as selfish ; virtuous, as sinful. No new faculties are necessary ; and no change is required, but of the disposition. How superior is the disposition here illustrated to that whose effects have been so uniformly dreadful ! Hitherto I have used the language of *supposition* only ; and have declared, that, if such were the character of our race,

such also would be the state of this unhappy world. Now I inform you, that such one day will be the true character and state of man.

The period will one day arrive; the period is now on the wing; the day will certainly dawn; the morning star is perhaps even now ascending in the east, of that day in which Christ will return and reign on the earth. I neither intend nor believe he will appear *in person*, until the great and final day, which the Scriptures emphatically call his *second* coming: for 'the heavens must receive him until the time of the restitution of all things.' But he will appear in his providence, and by his Spirit, to 'renew the face of the earth.' 'A new heart and a right spirit will he create within them. His law he will write in their hearts, and his fear will he put in their minds; and their sins and their iniquities will he remember no more.' This new heart, this right spirit, will be no other than the disposition which has been here considered; the very obedience of the law, which will be thus written; the new creation which is thus promised.

By the implantation of this holy character in the soul, a change will be accomplished, which is exhibited in the Scriptures in terms of hyperbolical and singular sublimity. In their present state of apostasy, mankind are considered in this sacred volume as being all buried in a death-like sleep. From this benumbing lethargy, hopeless and endless, unless removed by almighty power, they are represented as aroused anew to consciousness, to feeling, and to action, by the awakening voice of God. In the present state, they are declared to be madmen; groping in the gloom, wantoning in the excesses, and venting the rage of Bedlam. In the new one, they are exhibited as restored to reason, to sobriety, to intellectual dignity and usefulness, and as introduced again to the society, converse, and esteem of rational beings. Originally, they are prisoners to sin and Satan, the victims of turpitude, and the sport of fiends; yet they are 'prisoners of hope.' In their renovation,

they have heard 'liberty proclaimed to the captive, and the opening of the prison-doors to them that are bound;' and at the sound of these glad tidings, they have shaken off their chains, and escaped from their dungeon into 'the glorious liberty of the sons of God.' In their present state, they are pronounced to be dead, and fallen together in one great valley of the shadow of death, the appointed and immense receptacle of departed men, where their bones are dispersed over the waste, dried, whitened, and returning to their original dust. A voice from heaven, resounding through the regions of this immense catacomb, commands the scattered fragments to assemble from the four corners of heaven, to re-unite in their proper places, and to constitute anew the forms of men. A noise, a shaking, a rustling is heard over the vast Golgotha; a general commotion begins; and, moved by an instinctive power, bone seeks its kindred bone; the sinews and flesh spontaneously arise, and cover the naked form; and the Spirit of life breathes with one divine and universal energy on the unnumbered multitude. Inspired thus with breath and life, the great host of mankind instinctively rise, and stand on their feet, and live again with immortal life. The great world of death is filled with animated beings; and, throughout its amazing regions, those who were dead are alive again, and those who were lost to the creation, are found.

This resurrection is no other than a resurrection to spiritual life; no other than an assumption of this new and heavenly character. This character, this disposition, will constitute the sum and the glory of the millennial state, and the foundation of all its blessings. 'When the heavens shall drop down dew from above, the skies pour down righteousness, and the earth open, and bring forth salvation,' all the external good, all the splendour and distinction, of that happy period, will follow as things of course; as consequences which, in the divine system, virtue draws in its train. 'The Lord of Hosts will, therefore, make for all nations, a feast of fat things, a

feast of wines on the lees well refined.—The Lord of Hosts will swallow up death in victory: and will wipe away the tears from all faces; and he will take away the reproach of his people from all the earth.—He will lay the stones of Zion with fair colours, and her foundations with sapphires; will make her windows of agates, her gates of carbuncles, and all her borders of pleasant stones.—And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness; and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.’

SERMON XCIX.

THE LAW OF GOD.

THE SECOND GREAT COMMANDMENT.

UTILITY THE FOUNDATION OF VIRTUE.

I have shewed you all things, how that, so labouring, ye ought to support the weak; and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.—ACTS xx. 35.

IN the two last Discourses I endeavoured to shew, by a variety of arguments, that a disposition, voluntarily employed in doing good, is productive of more personal and public happiness than any other can be. In those Discourses, and in several preceding ones, it has, if I mistake not, been sufficiently proved, that the same disposition in the Creator and his intelligent creatures, is the source not only of more happiness to the creation at large than any other, but of all the happiness which has existed, or will ever exist.

Virtue, or moral excellence, is an object of such high import, as to have engaged in every enlightened country and period the deepest attention of mankind. It has of course been the subject of the most laborious investigations, and of very numerous discussions. Inquisitive men have asked with no small

anxiety. 'What is virtue? What is its nature? What is its excellence? and, What is the foundation on which this excellence rests?' To these questions, widely different and directly opposite answers have been given. In modern times, and in this, as well as other countries, much debate has existed concerning the *foundation* of virtue. It has been said to be founded in the *nature* of things; in the *reason* of things; in the *fitness* of things; in the will of God; and in *utility*. My intention in this Discourse is to *examine the nature of this subject*.

The phrase, *the foundation of virtue*, has been very differently understood by different writers. Indeed, the word *foundation*, in this case seems to be a defective one, as being ambiguous; and therefore exposed to different interpretations. When virtue is said to be founded in the *will of God*, or in *utility*, some writers appear to intend by this phraseology, that the will of God, or utility, is the rule, measure, or directory of virtuous conduct. Others evidently intend, that one or the other of these things is what constitutes it *virtue*; makes it valuable, excellent, lovely, praiseworthy, and rewardable. It is therefore absolutely necessary for me to observe, antecedently to entering on this discussion, that I use the phrase in the sense last mentioned; and intend, by the foundation of virtue, that which constitutes its value and excellence. It is necessary also to premise farther, that by the word *utility*, I mean *a tendency to produce happiness*.

Having premised these things, I shall endeavour, in the following Discourse, to support this doctrine,
THAT VIRTUE IS FOUNDED IN UTILITY.

The text is a general and indirect declaration of this doctrine. The word 'blessed,' is sometimes used to denote a state happy in itself, and sometimes a state made happy or blessed by God. 'To give,' in the sense of the text, is voluntarily to communicate happiness, or, in other words, to be voluntarily useful. As we are in fact made happy by God, when ever we are happy, it is evident that those moral

beings who are most happy, being made so by him, as a reward of their character and conduct, and not merely by the nature of that character and conduct, are most approved by him. That which is most approved by God, is in itself most excellent. But the text informs us, that voluntary usefulness is most approved by God, because it is peculiarly blessed by him; and is therefore the highest excellence. A man may be virtuous in *receiving* good at the hands of his fellow-creatures; but his virtue will consist only in the disposition with which he receives it; his gratitude, his desire to glorify God, and his wishes to requite, whenever it shall be in his power, his created benefactors. This is being useful in the only way which the situation here supposed allows; and the only thing which is virtuous or excellent in the mere state of receiving good.

To give, or communicate good, is a nobler and more excellent state of being than that of receiving good can be, because the giver is voluntarily the originator of happiness. In this conduct he resembles God himself, the giver of all good, in that characteristic which is the peculiar excellence and glory of his nature. Accordingly, God loves, and for this reason blesses him in a pre-eminent degree. The proof of his superior excellence is complete in the fact, that he is peculiarly blessed; for these peculiar blessings which he receives are indubitable evidence of the peculiar favour of God, and the peculiar favour of God is equal evidence of peculiar excellence in him who is thus blessed. But the only excellence here alleged or supposed by Christ, is the spirit of doing good; or, in other words, the spirit of voluntary usefulness. In this spirit then, virtue or moral excellence consists; and the only excellence, here supposed, is of course founded in utility.

To the evidence furnished by the text, both reason and revelation add ample confirmation. This trust will sufficiently appear in the course of the following observations:—

1. *Virtue is not founded in the will of God.*

Those who hold the doctrine which I have here denied, may have been led unwittingly to adopt it from an apprehension, that they could not ascribe too much to God. This apprehension is without doubt generally just ; yet it is not just in the absolute sense. There is neither irreverence nor mistake in saying, that Omnipotence cannot create that which will be self-contradictory, make two and two five, nor recall the existence of a past event, because these things would be impossible in their own nature. In the same manner, to ascribe to God that which is not done by him, though the ascription may flow from reverence to his character, is not yet dictated by reverence. That which God in fact does, is more honourable to him than any thing else can be ; and no error can in its nature be reverential towards God, or required by him of his creatures.

The doctrine, that *virtue* is founded in the *will of God*, supposes, that that which is now virtue, became such, became excellent, valuable, praiseworthy, and rewardable, because *God willed it to be so* ; and, had he *not willed* it to be so, it would not have been *virtue*. Of course, if we were to suppose intelligent beings created and left without any law, to choose their conduct ; or, if we were to suppose the universe to exist just as it now exists, and exist thus either by chance, or necessity ; that which is now virtuous, excellent, and praiseworthy, would at the utmost possess a nature merely indifferent ; and although all other things remained just as they now are, would cease to be excellent, lovely, and deserving of approbation. According to the same scheme also, that which is now sinful, or vicious, would cease to be of this nature, and no longer merit hatred, blame, or punishment. In plainer language, veracity and lying, honesty and fraud, justice and oppression, kindness and cruelty, although exactly the same things which they now are, and although producing exactly the same effects, would no more possess their present, opposite moral character, but would equally deserve our love and approbation, or

our hatred and disesteem. If virtue and vice are such only because God willed them to be such; if virtue is excellent, and vice worthless, only because he willed them to be so; then vice in itself is just as excellent as virtue, and virtue just as worthless as vice. Let me ask, Can any man believe this to be true?

Farther: The supposition, that virtue is founded in the will of God, implies, that God willed virtue to be excellent without any reason. If virtue and vice had originally, or as they were seen by the eye of God, no moral difference in their nature, then there was plainly no reason why God should prefer, or why he actually preferred, one of them to the other. There was, for example, no reason why he chose and required that intelligent creatures should love him, and each other, rather than that they should hate him, and hate each other. In choosing and requiring that they should exercise this love, God acted therefore without any motive whatever. Certainly, no sober man will attribute this conduct to God.

This supposition also is inconsistent with the omniscience of God. Every thing which exists, or which will ever exist, was, antecedently to its existence, or, in other words, eternally and immutably, present to the divine mind. In the same manner, all other possible things, that is, things which God could have created if he had pleased, were also present to his view. Every man knows that a vast multitude of such things are successively present to his own imagination, and that he can think of new worlds, new beings to inhabit them, and new furniture to replenish them. But, unquestionably, God knows all things which are known by his creatures, and infinitely more. When created things were thus present to his eye, antecedently to their existence, they were exactly the same things in his view, which they afterward were when they began to exist, had exactly the same natures, sustained exactly the same relations, and were just as good, indifferent, or evil, just as excellent or worthless, as amiable or

hateful, as commendable or blameworthy, as rewardable or punishable, as they afterward were in fact. This may be illustrated by a familiar example. Most persons have read more or less of those fictitious histories which are called novels; and every person knows that the several actors exhibited in them never had any real existence. Yet every one knows equally well, that the characters which they severally sustain are as really good or evil, lovely or hateful, praiseworthy or blamable, as the same characters of the same persons would be had they all been living men and women. It is therefore unanswerably evident, that moral characters, when merely seen in contemplation, are, independently of their actual existence in living beings, and therefore before they have existed in such beings, as well as when they never exist at all in this manner, good or evil to the eye of the mind. Of course, they are good or evil in their own nature. Of course, they were seen to be good or evil by the omniscience of God. It is therefore inconsistent with the doctrine, that God is omniscient, to say that virtue is founded in the will of God.

Again: The scheme which I am controverting, not only involves in it, that mankind, with all their impiety, injustice, cruelty, oppression, wars, and butcheries, are in their nature equally amiable, and excellent as angels, with all their truth and benevolence; but also, that the character of fiends is in itself, and independently of the fact, that God chose it should be otherwise, just as lovely, excellent, and praiseworthy as that of angels. If then God had willed the character which Satan adopted and sustains to be moral excellence, and that which Gabriel sustains to be moral worthlessness, these two beings, continuing in every other respect the same, would have interchanged their characters. Satan would have become entirely lovely, and Gabriel entirely detestable. Must not he who can believe this doctrine, as easily believe, that if God had willed it, two and two would have become five? Is it at all

easier to believe that truth and falsehood can interchange their natures, than that a square and a circle can interchange theirs?

Finally: If virtue and vice, or sin and holiness, are founded only in the will of God, then I ask What is the nature of that will? We are accustomed to say, the Scriptures reveal God as holy, righteous, good, and 'glorious in holiness;' expressions, which, together with many others of the same nature, indicate that God himself, and therefore that the will of God, is excellent, and supremely deserving of his own infinite love, and of the highest love of all intelligent creatures. Does this excellence of God depend on the fact, that he willed his moral character, and therefore his will, to be excellent? Or is the character of God, and of consequence his will, excellent in its own nature? If the divine character be not excellent in its own nature, and independently of any act of the divine will determining that it should be so, then, if God had been a being infinitely malevolent, and by an act of his will had determined that his character should be infinitely excellent, it would of course have become infinitely excellent; and he himself would have deserved to be loved, praised, and glorified for his infinite malice, cruelty, and oppression, just as he now does for his infinite goodness, truth, faithfulness, and mercy. According to this scheme, therefore, there is no original moral difference between the characters of an infinitely malevolent being, and an infinitely benevolent one; because this difference depends on a mere arbitrary act of will, and not at all on the respective natures of the things themselves. That a malevolent being would have made this determination, there is no more reason to doubt, than that it would be made by a benevolent being; for it cannot be doubted that a malevolent being would have entirely loved and honoured himself. The question, whether God is a benevolent or malevolent being, seems therefore to be nugatory; for all our inquiries concerning the subject which have any

practical importance terminate in this single question, What has God chosen? We have of course no interest in asking what is his moral nature.

The Scriptures certainly exhibit this subject in a very different light. They every where consider moral things, that is, both moral beings and their actions, as differing altogether in their several natures, and independently of any act of the divine will, determining that they should thus differ. Particularly, they exhibit God himself not only as being holy, righteous, just, true, faithful, kind, and merciful, but as excellent on account of these things; infinitely excellent, infinitely glorious, infinitely deserving of the love, that is, the complacency (the kind of love every where intended in this Discourse) of his intelligent creatures. Accordingly, God is often spoken of as excellent, and as excellency in the *abstract*. Thus, he is styled 'the Excellency of Jacob.' His 'name' is said to be 'excellent in all the earth.'—'How excellent,' saith the psalmist, 'is thy loving kindness.'—'The Lord of hosts,' says Isaiah, 'is excellent in working.' In all these passages it is plainly declared, that God is excellent in his own nature. In the same manner the Scriptures assert, that 'his law is perfect,' and 'his commandment pure;' that 'his statutes are right,' and 'his judgments altogether righteous;' and that 'his commandment is holy, just, and good:' that is, that these things possess the several kinds of excellence attributed to them, in their own nature. For if the Scriptures intended only that they were good, because God willed them to be so, when they were before neither good nor evil, it would have been mere tautology to have used this language. It would have been no more, than saying, that the law, the commandments, and the statutes, of God were *his* law, commandments, and statutes: this fact being, according to the scheme here opposed, all that in which their excellence lies. In the same manner, when it is said, 'Thou art good, and doest good;' it ought to be said, 'Thou art what thou art, and doest

what thou doest;' for this is all that is meant, according to the scheme in question.

In the same manner, the Scriptures declare, that 'the righteous Lord loveth righteousness;' and thus teach us, that there is in righteousness a cause, a reason, or, in other words, a nature, for which it is, and deserves to be, loved. They also assure us, that he 'hates wickedness,' and that it is 'an abomination to him.' There is therefore a reason why he hates it. As he always hated the latter, and loved the former, and therefore, before the one was forbidden and the other required of his intelligent creatures, it is certain that the one was hateful and the other lovely, in its own nature.

In Jer. ix. 24, it is said, 'Let him that glorieth glory in this; that he understandeth, and knoweth me, that I am the Lord, which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.' In this passage God requires mankind to glory, not merely because he acts; but because he acts in such a manner; because he 'exercises loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth;' and informs us that he himself delights in these things; in other words, because they are lovely in his sight.

In Heb. vi. 18, it is said, that 'it is impossible for God to lie.' If at any given time it is impossible for God to lie, it has been always impossible. For what reason? If truth and falsehood are in their own nature indifferent, then certainly it was once just as easy for God to lie, as to speak truth. The only reason why it is now impossible for him to utter falsehood is, that he is utterly indisposed to this conduct. But if falsehood and truth have the same moral nature in themselves, there can be no reason why he was originally disposed to speak truth rather than falsehood. Yet he is infinitely disposed to speak truth, and infinitely indisposed to utter falsehood. Falsehood is therefore totally odious in itself, and truth altogether desirable.

Every thing contained in the Scriptures relative to

this subject is of the same tenor, so far as I have been able to understand them, with the passages which I have quoted. Nor have I found in them a single hint that virtue and vice have not in themselves a totally different moral nature, or that they depend for their excellence and worthlessness on an act of the divine will. On the contrary, the whole drift of the Scriptures is to exhibit them as possessed of these characteristics in themselves; and as for this reason chosen and required on the one hand, and rejected and forbidden on the other.

There are persons, who speak of the will of God as constituting the nature of things, when they only mean that it gives them existence. These persons appear not to discern that the nature of the thing is exactly the same, whether it exists, or is only seen in contemplation. The Achilles of Homer, the Æneas of Virgil, the Lear of Shakspeare, and the Grandison of Richardson, have all the same character which real men, answering severally to the descriptions of them, would possess. The will of God gives birth to the existence of all things. But the things themselves, as seen by the divine mind, have exactly the same nature, and sustain the same relations to each other; have the same value or worthlessness, the same excellence or turpitude, which they have when they really exist. This nature is what makes them desirable or undesirable to the eye of God, and induces him either to choose or reject them. While it is true therefore, that the will of God gives birth to all things, and to their several natures, as really existing in fact, it is equally true that, as seen by the divine mind, the same things had exactly the same nature before they existed. A house before it is built, and when formed merely in a plan, has exactly the same figure and proportions as seen by the mind of the builder, which it has after it is built according to this plan. Truth and falsehood, right and wrong in creatures, were exactly the same things to the eye of Omniscience before and after they existed.

From these considerations it is, I apprehend, evident, that *the foundation of virtue is not in the will of God, but in the nature of things.* The next object of inquiry therefore is, *Where, in the nature of things, shall we find this foundation?* I begin my answer to this question by observing,

2. *That there is no ultimate good but happiness.*

By *ultimate good* I intend, that which is *originally denominated good.* Good is of two kinds only: Happiness, and the causes or means of happiness. Happiness is the ultimate good; the causes or means of happiness are good only because they produce it. Thus fruit is good, because it is pleasant to the taste. The tree on which it grows is good, because it produces it. Health is good in itself; a medicine is good, because it preserves or restores it.

We are accustomed to hear so much said, and truly said, concerning the excellence, beauty, and glory of virtue, that we are ready to conceive and speak of it as being original or ultimate good, and independently of the happiness which it brings with it. Nay, we are ready to feel dissatisfied with ourselves and others for calling this position in question; to consider this conduct as involving a kind of irreverence towards this glorious object; as diminishing its importance, and obscuring its lustre. This, however, arises from mere misapprehension. If virtue brought with it no enjoyment to us, and produced no happiness to others, it would be wholly destitute of all the importance, beauty, and glory, with which it is now invested. Let any good man ask himself what that is for which he values his own virtue; what constitutes the commendations of it in the conversation and writings, particularly the sermons, with which he is acquainted; and what is the amount of all that for which it is commended in the Scriptures; and he will find every idea which he forms of it, distinctly and definitely, completely summed up in these two things; that it is *the means of glory to God, and of good to his creatures.* I have shewn in a former Discourse that to glorify God

that is, voluntarily (the thing which is here intended), is exactly the same conduct towards him which, when directed towards creatures, produces their happiness. It is, in truth, doing all that which it is in our power to do towards the happiness of the Creator. The happiness of God consists in the enjoyment furnished partly by his sufficiency for all great and glorious purposes, and partly by the actual accomplishment of these purposes. I separate these things only for the sake of exhibiting them more distinctly to view, and am well aware that, as they exist in the divine mind, they are absolutely inseparable. 'The Lord,' saith the psalmist, 'shall rejoice in his works.' Had these works never existed, God would not thus rejoice. God is also said to delight in the upright; and to delight in his church. Were there no upright persons, were there no church, this delight would cease. It is, therefore, true in the proper sense, that virtuous persons, by voluntarily glorifying God, become the objects of his delight; or, in other words, the means of happiness or enjoyment to him. It will not be supposed that God is, for this reason, dependant on his creatures for his happiness, or for any part of it. These very creatures are absolutely dependant on him, and are made by himself the objects of his delight; and such they become by the same voluntary conduct which, in other cases, produces happiness in creatures. When we consider virtue as it respects creatures only, the character which I have given to it is more easily seen, and more readily comprehended. It may easily be seen, in this case, that all its value consists in the enjoyment which either attends or follows it. All the *exercises* of virtue are delightful in themselves. It is delightful to do good to others, to see them happy, and made happy by our means, to enjoy peace of conscience, and self-approbation. These, and the like enjoyments may be said to *attend* virtue, and, as is well known, enter largely into every account which is given of its excellence. The *consequences* of virtue are no other than the good which it produces.

in originating and increasing social happiness ; and these, together with the articles involved in the two preceding considerations, make up the whole amount of all the commendations of this divine object, given either by the Scriptures, or by mankind. The excellence of virtue, therefore, consists wholly in this ; that it is the *cause* of good, that is, of happiness ; the ultimate good, the only thing for which virtue is valuable.

Virtue in God, or benevolence, is, on all hands, considered as the glory and excellency of the divine character. What is benevolence ? The love of doing good, or a disposition to produce happiness. In what does its excellence consist ? In this, that it is the voluntary cause of happiness. Take away this single attribute of virtue, and it will be easily seen that its excellence is all taken away also.

These observations prove, if I mistake not, that happiness is the only ultimate good ; and that virtue is termed good, only as being the cause of happiness.

3. *Virtue is the only original cause of happiness.*

It is hardly necessary to say, that *involuntary* beings can, of themselves, produce nothing, as being absolutely inactive ; and that there are no *active* beings, beside those which are *voluntary*. But voluntary beings produce happiness only when they are disposed to produce it ; and the only disposition which prompts to the production of it is virtue. This is so obvious, after what has been said, as to need no farther illustration.

Contrivance and activity are the original sources of all the effects or changes, which take place in the universe, particularly of all the happiness which it contains. Contrivance and activity in the Creator gave birth to all existence, except his own. Contrivance and activity in intelligent creatures, under God, give birth to all the happiness of which they are the sources to themselves and each other.

Minds are active only by means of the power of willing. The two great dispositions of minds, by which all their volitions are characterized and di-

rected, are benevolence and selfishness. Benevolence is virtue, selfishness is sin. Benevolence aims to promote happiness in all beings capable of happiness : selfishness at the promotion of the private, separate happiness of *one*, subordinating to it that of *all others*, and opposing that of others, whenever it is considered as inconsistent with that of one's self. Benevolence, therefore, directs the whole active power or energy of the mind in which it exists, to the production of the most *extensive* happiness. This is what I intend by the *utility of virtue* ; and that in which, as it appears to my own view, all its excellence is found. Sin is naturally and necessarily the parent of misery ; since it arms every individual against the interest of every other.

Were sin in its own proper tendency to produce invariably the same good which it is the tendency of virtue to produce, were it the means invariably of the same glory to God, and of the same enjoyment to the universe, no reason is apparent to me why it would not become excellent, commendable, and rewardable, in the same manner as virtue now is. Were virtue regularly to effectuate the same dishonour to God and the same misery to intelligent creatures now effectuated by sin, I see no reason why we should not attribute to it all the odiousness, blameworthiness, and desert of punishment, which we now attribute to sin. All this is, I confess, impossible, and is rendered so by the nature of these things. Still the supposition may be allowably made for the purposes of discussion.

The great objection to this doctrine arises from a misapprehension of the subject. It is this ; that if *virtue* is founded in *utility*, then utility becomes *the measure of virtue*, and of course the *rule* of all our *moral conduct*. This is the error of Godwin ; and, in an indefinite degree, of Paley, and several other writers. Were we omniscient, and able to discern the true nature of all the effects of our conduct, this consequence must, undoubtedly, be admitted. To the eye of God it is the real rule. It will not,

trust, be denied, that he has chosen and required that to be done by his intelligent creatures which is most useful, or, in other words, most productive of good to the universe, and of glory to himself; rather than that which is less so. But to us utility, as judged of by ourselves, cannot be a proper rule of moral conduct. The *real usefulness* of our conduct, or its usefulness upon the whole, lies in the nature of all its *effects*, considered as one *aggregate*. But nothing is more evident than that few, very few indeed, of these can ever be known to us by our own foresight. If the information given us by the Scriptures concerning this subject were to be lost, we should be surprised to see how small was the number of cases in which this knowledge was attainable, even in a moderate degree; and how much uncertainty attended even these. As, therefore, we are unable to discern with truth or probability the real usefulness of our conduct, it is impossible that our moral actions should be safely guided by this rule.

The Bible is, with the plainest evidence, the only safe rule by which moral beings can, in this world, direct their conduct. The precepts of this sacred volume were all formed by him who alone 'sees the end from the beginning,' and who alone, therefore, understands the real nature of all moral actions. No other being is able to determine how far any action is upon the whole useful, or noxious, or to make utility the measure of virtue. As well might a man determine that a path, whose direction he can discern only for a furlong, will conduct him in a straight course to a city distant from him a thousand miles, as to determine that an action, whose immediate tendency he perceives to be useful, will therefore be useful through a thousand years, or even through ten. How much less able must he be to perceive what will be its real tendency in the remote ages of endless duration. It is impossible, therefore, that utility, as decided by our judgment, should become the rule of moral action.

It has also been objected to this doctrine, that if

virtue is founded in utility, *every thing* which is useful, must so far be virtuous. This objection it is hardly necessary to answer. Voluntary usefulness is the only virtue. A smatterer in moral philosophy knows that understanding and will are necessary to the existence of virtue. He who informs us, that if virtue is founded in utility, animals, vegetables, and minerals, the sun, and the moon, and the stars, must be virtuous, so far as they are useful, is either disposed to trifle with mankind for his amusement, or supposes them to be triflers.

REMARKS.

1. *From these observations we learn, in an interesting manner, the desirableness of virtue.*

The whole tendency of virtue is to promote happiness, and this is its only ultimate tendency. It prefers, of course, the greater happiness to the less, and the greatest always to that which can exist in a subordinate degree. It diffuses happiness every where, and to every being capable of receiving it, so far as this diffusion is in its power. In this respect it knows no distinction of family, country, or world, and operates to the benefit of those who are near, more than to that of those who are distant, only because its operations will be more effectual, and because, when all pursue this course, the greatest good will be done to all. Its efficacy also is complete. The object at which it aims it can accomplish. It can contrive, it can direct, it can effectuate. To do good is its *happiness* as well as its *tendency*. It will, therefore, never be inattentive, never discouraged, never disposed to relax its efforts. Thus it is a perennial spring, whose waters never fail; a spring at which thousands and millions may stake their thirst for enjoyment, and of which the streams are always pure, healthful, and refreshing.

2. *We learn, from the same observations, the odious nature of sin.*

Sin, or selfishness, aiming supremely at the private, separate good of an individual, and subordi-

nating to it the good of all others, confines its efforts, of course, to the narrow sphere of one's self. All the individuals also, in whom this spirit prevails, have each a personal good, to which each subordinates every other good. There are, therefore, as many separate interests in a collection of selfish beings as there are individuals, and to each of these interests the individual whose it is, intends to make those ~~of~~ all others subservient. Of consequence, these interests cannot fail to clash, and the individuals to oppose and contend with each other. Hence an unceasing course of hatred, wrath, revenge, and violence must prevail among beings of this character; of private quarrels and public wars. All who oppose this darling interest are regarded by the individual as his enemies; and thus all naturally become the enemies of all. Where this disposition is in a great measure unrestrained, it makes an individual a tyrant, and a society a collection of banditti. Where it is wholly unrestrained, it converts intelligent beings into fiends, and their habitation into hell.

The ruling principle, here, is to *gain* good from *others*, and not to *communicate* it to them. This darling spirit, so cherished by mankind, so active in the present world, so indulged, flattered, and boasted of by those who possess it, is, instead of being wise and profitable, plainly foolish, shameful, ruinous, and deserving of the most intense reprobation. Notwithstanding all the restraints laid upon it by the good providence of God; notwithstanding the shortness of life, which prevents us from forming permanent plans, making great acquisitions to our selves, and producing great mischiefs to others, notwithstanding the weakness, frailty, and fear which continually attend us; notwithstanding the efficacy of natural affection, the power of conscience, and the benevolent influence of religion on the affairs of mankind; it makes the present world an uncomfortable and melancholy residence, and creates three-fourths of the misery suffered by the race of Adam.

All these evils exist, because men are disinclined to do good, or to be voluntarily useful. Were they only disposed to promote each other's happiness, or, in other words, to be useful to each other, the world would become a pleasant and desirable habitation. The calamities immediately brought upon us by providence would be found to be few; those induced by men upon themselves and each other would vanish; and in their place beneficence would spread its innumerable blessings.

3. *These observations strongly exhibit to us the miserable state of the world of perdition.*

In this melancholy region no good is done, nor intended to be done. No good is therefore enjoyed. Still, the mind retains its original activity; and is wise and vigorous to do evil, although it has neither knowledge nor inclination to do good. Here all the passions of a selfish spirit are let loose, and riot, and reign, and ravage. Here, therefore, all are enemies. Here the wretched individual surveying the vast regions around him, and casting his eyes forward into the immeasurable progress of eternity, sees himself absolutely alone in the midst of millions, in solitude complete and endless. Here voluntary usefulness is for ever unknown and unheard of; while selfishness in all its dreadful forms assumes an undisputed, an unresisted dominion, a terrible despotism; and fills the world around her with rage and wretchedness, with terror and doubt, with desolation and despair.

4. *How delightful a view do these observations give of heaven.*

Heaven is the world of voluntary usefulness. The only disposition of angels, and 'the spirits of just men made perfect,' is to do good; their only employment to produce happiness. In this employment all the energy of sanctified and perfect minds is exerted without weariness, and without end. How vast then, how incomprehensible, how endlessly increasing, must be the mass of happiness brought by their united efforts into being! How ample

provision must it be for all the continually expanding wishes, the continually enlarging capacities, of its glorious inhabitants! How wonderfully also must the sum of enjoyment be enhanced to each, when we remember that he will experience the same delight in the good enjoyed by others, as in that which is immediately his own! Who would not labour to gain an entrance into such a world as this? Who would not bend all his efforts, exhaust all his powers, encounter any earthly suffering, and resolutely overcome every earthly obstacle, to acquire that divine and delightful character of voluntary usefulness, which makes heaven such a world; which makes it the place of God's peculiar presence, the means of his highest glory, and the mansion of everlasting life, peace, and joy to his children!

SERMON C

THE LAW OF GOD. THE DECALOGUE.

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT.

Thou shalt have no other gods before me.—EXOD. XX. 3.

IN the series of Discourses which I have lately delivered concerning the two great commands of the moral law, it has, if I mistake not, been sufficiently shewn, that the disposition required by the Creator of his intelligent creatures in this law, is *disinterested love*, or the spirit of doing good. The *tendency* of this disposition is always to do what is right. It will not however follow, that the mind in which it exists will be able always to discern the course of conduct which it ought, upon the whole, to pursue. The disposition may with absolute correctness dictate what is absolutely proper to be done in a case already before the view of the mind, and yet the mind be wholly ignorant whether that case, or th

conduct in question, is such as would upon the whole be best for it to pursue, or whether superior wisdom would not be able to devise for it other and much more desirable courses of action. A child may be perfectly holy, and yet possess too little understanding to know in what way he may best act; in what way he may most promote the glory of God, the good of his fellow-creatures, or the good of himself. His disposition may prompt to that which is exactly right in all the conduct which is within the reach of his understanding. Yet, if he had more comprehensive views, he might discern far more desirable modes of action, in which he might be much more useful than in any which he is at present able to devise. He may be able to apply the two great commands of the moral law, which have been so extensively considered, with exact propriety to all such cases as are actually within his view, and yet be utterly unable to devise for himself those kinds of conduct in which his obedience to these commands might be most profitably employed.

What is true of a child is true, in different degrees, of all intelligent creatures. God only, as was shewn in a former Discourse, is able to discern and to prescribe the conduct which, upon the whole, it is proper for such creatures to pursue. He sees from the beginning to the end; and perfectly understands the nature and the consequences of all intelligent action. This knowledge, which he alone possesses, and which is indispensable to this purpose, enables him to accomplish it in a manner absolutely perfect.

What is true in this respect of intelligent creatures universally, is peculiarly true of *sinful* creatures. The disposition of sinners leads them of course to that conduct which is wrong and mischievous. They are, therefore, always in danger of erring from mere *disposition*. Besides, sin renders the mind *voluntarily ignorant*; and in this manner also exposes it continually to error. A great part of all the false opinions entertained by mankind concerning their duty are to be attributed solely to the *biasses*

of a sinful disposition. None are so blind, none so erroneous, as those who are unwilling to see.

From a merciful regard to these circumstances, particularly, of mankind, God has been pleased to reveal to them his pleasure and their duty; to disclose to them all those modes of moral action, all those kinds of moral conduct in which they may most promote his glory, and their own good. The importance of this revelation is evinced in the strongest manner, by the moral situation of that part of the human race to whom it has never been published. I need not inform you, that they have been wholly ignorant of the true God, and of a great part of the principles and precepts of the moral system, that they have worshipped men, animals, evil spirits, and gods of gold and silver, of wood and stone. I need not inform you, that they have violated every moral precept, and every dictate of natural affection. I need not inform you, that without revelation we should have been ~~heathens~~ also; and should, in all probability, have been this day prostrating ourselves before an ox or an ape, or passing children through the fire unto Moloch.

Among the several parts of the revelation, which has raised our moral condition so greatly above that of the heathen, *the decalogue* is eminently distinguished. The decalogue is a larger summary of our duty than that which is contained in the two great commands already considered. The same things, in substance, are required in it; but they are branched out into various important particulars, all of them supremely necessary to be known by us. To enforce their importance on our minds, God was pleased to utter the several precepts contained in this summary with his own voice, and to write them with his own finger on two tables of stone, fashioned by himself. They were published also amid the thunderings and lightnings of Mount Sinai, from the bosom of the cloud by which it was enveloped, and out of the flame which ascended from its summit.

The four first of the commands contained in the

decatalogue regulate our immediate duty to God ; the six last, our duty to men. The former were written on one, properly called the first table ; the latter on another, usually styled the second table.

Two of these commands, one of the first and one of the second table, are *positive*, that is, *direct injunctions* of our *duty* ; the remaining eight are *negative*, or *prohibitory*. Both classes, however, are of exactly the same extent ; those which are positive, forbidding the conduct which is contrary to what they enjoin ; and those which are negative, requiring that which is contrary to what they forbid.

The *first* of these commands is the text. The duty enjoined in it is of such a nature, that, to a mind governed by the dictates of reason, an express injunction of it would seem in a great measure unnecessary, if not altogether superfluous. So vast is the difference between the real God and every possible substitute, that sober contemplation would scarcely suspect it to be possible for a man, who was not bereft of reason, to put any other being into his place, even under the influence of the most wandering fancy. How unlike all other beings must he evidently be, who made the heavens and the earth, whose breath kindled the sun and the stars, and whose hand rolls the planets through immensity ! How infinitely superior does he obviously appear to every thing which he has made, and how infinitely remote from any rival or any second ! Still, experience has amply testified, that mankind have, almost without ceasing, substituted other gods for Jehovah. Nay, it has clearly evinced, not only that we need to be taught the duty required by him in the text, but that no precepts, no instructions, and no motives have been sufficient to keep the world in obedience to this first and greatest law of moral conduct. Nothing indeed has so strongly evinced the madness of the human heart, as the conduct which it has exhibited towards the Creator, and the idolatry which it has rendered to a vast multitude of the works of his hands.

The word 'gods,' in this passage, may be regarded

as denoting not only the various objects of *religious worship*, but also all the objects of *supreme regard, affection, or esteem*. The command, it will be observed, is expressed in the absolute or universal manner; and may be fairly considered as including every thing to which mankind render, or can be supposed to render, such regard. The phrase 'before me,' is equivalent to the expressions, in my sight, in my presence; and teach us, that no such gods are to be admitted within the omnipresence, or within the view of the omniscience, of Jehovah. With these explanations, it will be easily seen, that the text indispensably requires us to acknowledge the *real God as our God*; and *forbids* us to regard any other being in this character.

To acknowledge Jehovah as our God, is to love him supremely, to fear before him with all the heart, and to serve him throughout all our days, in absolute preference to every other being. In this manner we testify, that we esteem him infinitely more excellent, venerable, and deserving of our obedience than all other beings. After the observations which I have heretofore made concerning these subjects, it will be unnecessary to expatiate on them at the present time. I shall only observe, therefore, that this is the highest, the noblest, and the best service which we can render to any being, and the only way in which we can acknowledge any being as God. When we render this service to Jehovah, we acknowledge him in his true character. He is infinitely the greatest and the best of all beings; and we are under infinitely greater obligations to him than to any other. Of course, his claims to this service from us, and from all other intelligent creatures, are supreme and exclusive. When it is rendered by them, God is acknowledged to be, what he is, thus divinely great and excellent. At the same time, and in the same manner, we declare, that by his character and by his blessings he has laid us under the highest obligations to such conduct.

As this is the only true, natural, and proper ac-

knowledge of God, so, when we render the same service to any creature, we acknowledge that creature as our god. In this conduct we are guilty of two gross and abominable sins. In the first place, we elevate the being who is thus regarded, to the character and station of a god ; and, in the second place, we remove the true God in our hearts from his own character of infinite glory and excellence, and from that exalted station which he holds, as the infinite ruler and benefactor of the universe. This sin is a complication of wickedness wonderfully various and dreadful. In truth, it is a comprehensive summary of iniquity, and the basis of all the crimes which are committed by intelligent creatures. The evil involved in it may in some measure be learned from the following observations :

1. *We are in this conduct guilty of the grossest falsehood.*

We practically deny that Jehovah is possessed of those attributes which alone demand such service from intelligent creatures ; and, on the other hand, assert in the same manner, that the being to whom we render this service, is invested with these attributes. No falsehoods can be so gross or so abominable as these. Nor can they be uttered in any manner so forcible, so provoking, or so guilty. Our practice is the real interpreter of our thoughts. The tongue may utter any thing at pleasure ; but the heart is always disclosed by the language of the life.

2. *In this conduct, also, we are guilty of the greatest injustice.*

This evil is likewise twofold. First, we violate the rightful claim of Jehovah to the service of intelligent creatures ; and, secondly, we render to a creature the service which is due to HIM alone. The right which God has to this service is supreme and unalienable. He is our Maker and Preserver. We are in the most absolute sense his property ; and are bound therefore by the highest obligation, to be voluntarily his ; cheerfully to resign ourselves to his pleasure, and to be employed in doing his will. The

obligations arising from this source are not a little enhanced by the fact, that the service which he actually requires of us is in the highest degree profitable to ourselves; our highest excellence, our greatest honour, and our supreme happiness. At the same time, these obligations are wonderfully increased by the consideration that God is infinitely excellent and amiable, and therefore claims this testimony of the heart as the just and perfect acknowledgment of his perfect character. Were he *not* our Creator, nor our Preserver, we could not still refuse to render him this regard, without the greatest injury to so glorious a being.

The created object to which we actually yield this service, is destitute of all claims to it. In rendering it to him, therefore, we add insult to injustice; and, not contented with denying and violating the rights of the Creator, we prefer to him, in this manner, a being who 'is less than nothing and vanity.'

3. *We are also guilty of the vilest ingratitude.*

From the wisdom, power, and goodness of God we derive our being, our blessings, and our hopes. He created us, he preserves us, and he daily 'loads us with his loving kindness.' He gave his Son to die for us, and sent his Spirit to sanctify us. It is impossible that we should be in any circumstances which demand equal gratitude towards any, or towards all created beings. The service which he actually requires, as the requital of all this beneficence, is no other than in our thoughts, affections, and conduct, to acknowledge him to be what he is; to reverence him, as being infinitely great; to love him, as infinitely excellent; and to serve him, as the infinitely righteous and reasonable ruler of all things. What ingratitude can be compared with that of a creature who refuses this service? Yet even his ingratitude is mightily enhanced by the wanton wickedness of transferring the regard which is due to him only, to one of his creatures, a creature like ourselves, perhaps inferior to ourselves; a being in this view of no worth, to whom we are under no ob-

ligations, and who has not the smallest claim to any such homage, What crime can be more provoking or more guilty than the preference of such a creature to such a God?

It was observed above, that the sin forbidden in the text is wickedness wonderfully complicated. Nothing would be more easy than to shew that pride, rebellion, hatred of excellence, blasphemy, and many other sins, are included in this conduct. It would, however, be unnecessary for the present design, and the time which such an examination would demand, will, if I mistake not, be more profitably employed in attending to the following

REMARKS.

1. *From these observations we learn, that idolatry is a sin of the first magnitude.*

That a sin which combines in itself falsehood, injustice, and ingratitude, pride, rebellion, and blasphemy, all existing in the grossest and most impudent degree, is of the first magnitude, cannot be questioned with reason or decency. Equally evident is it, that a sin which is at the bottom of all other wickedness, must be peculiarly enormous. That such is the nature of idolatry, is unanswerably proved by the fact, that wherever God is acknowledged in the manner above described, the moral character is of course spotless and unblamable. The commencement of turpitude in an intelligent creature, is his alienation from God, and his preference of some other object to Jehovah. In proportion to the prevalence of this spirit, wickedness of every kind prevails; and in proportion to the degree in which the soul overcomes and renounces this preference, it becomes possessed of moral excellence in all its forms. This truth is strongly seen in the character and conduct of all those virtuous men whose history is recorded in the Scriptures. In a manner scarcely less forcible or certain, it is also seen in the experience of mankind. All virtue flourishes wherever God is acknowledged according to the import of the text; and wherever he

is not thus acknowledged, all virtue decays and dies. The great, open, public acknowledgment of God is exhibited in the solemnities of the sabbath, and the sanctuary. Wherever these exist uniformly and prosperously, goodness of character and of life will be regularly found to prevail. Wherever they decline or vanish, virtue invariably vanishes with them.

Nor is this truth less evident from the personal experience of every Christian. Whenever he magnifies in his heart his Father, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, all his affections are purified, evangelical, and heavenly. His conversation is such as becometh godliness; and his life 'adorns the doctrine of God his Saviour;' is a happy resemblance of the celestial character, and a delightful preparation for celestial enjoyment. But when he ceases for a time to yield this glory to his Maker, when the importance of the divine character is lessened or obscured, in his eyes, when God becomes to the view of his mind less venerable, less excellent, and less lovely, his apprehensions of spiritual objects are clouded and dim; his virtuous affections are cold, inactive, and lifeless; his purposes are bounded by the present world, and centered in himself; and his life is divested of its former beauty, worth, and enjoyment. God is the sun of the soul. Wherever he shines, there is more moral day, warmth, life, and energy. There every thing excellent springs up beneath his quickening beams, grows unceasingly with vigour and beauty, and ripens into usefulness and enjoyment. In the absence of this divine luminary, the soul is darkened by night, and chilled by a moral winter; its views become dim, its affections frozen and torpid, and its progress through life a scene of desolation.

2. *The same observations teach us that all mankind are guilty of idolatry.*

Covetousness is styled 'idolatry' by St. Paul; and 'stubbornness' by the prophet Samuel. To many other sins this title is obviously, and to all sin really, applicable. Sin universally is no other than selfishness, or a preference of one's self to all other beings.

and of one's private interests and gratifications to the well-being of the universe, of God, and the intelligent creation. Of this selfishness all men are more or less the subjects. In the exercise of it, they love and serve themselves, 'rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.' No beings, except those who inhabit the world of perdition, are probably more undeserving of this high regard. We are not only little and insignificant, born of the dust and kindred to animals; but we are, and are in this very conduct, odious and abominable, 'drinking iniquity like water.' To ourselves we render that supreme regard which is due to God only. Thus we literally idolize ourselves; and, as every man living is guilty of this conduct, every man living is essentially an idolator.

This spirit manifests itself, however, in an almost endless variety of forms. The parent often idolizes his child; the beauty, her face and form; the man of genius, his talents; the ambitious man, his fame, power, or station; the miser, his gold; the accomplished man, his manners; the ostentatious man, his villa: and the sensualist, his pleasures. By all these, however, a single spirit is cherished, and discovered. The parent doats upon his child, because it is *his* child. Had it been born of other parents, it might indeed be occasionally agreeable to him, but would never have become an object of this peculiar fondness.

This is unanswerably evinced by experience; particularly by the fact, that much more promising and engaging children are never thus doated upon when they are the children of his fellow-men. What is true of this instance is generally true of the others. Our homage is rendered to our *own* talents, possessions, and enjoyments; not to those of our fellow-men. One spirit therefore, pervades and reigns throughout all this varied idolatry.

3. *With these observations in view, we shall cease to wonder that mankind have been so extensively guilty of continual and enormous sins against each other.*

Sin is one undivided disposition. If it exists in any intelligent being, it exists and operates towards any and every other being with whom he is concerned. It cannot exist towards God, and not towards man; or towards man, and not towards God. It is a wrong bias of the soul; and of course operates only to wrong, whatever being the operation may respect.

That those who are guilty of such falsehood towards God, should be guilty of gross falsehood towards each other, to whom they are under far less obligations of every kind, is certainly to be expected. That those who with such gross injustice violate all rights, the highest, the most absolute, should, without remorse, violate rights of so inferior a nature, is no less to be expected. Equally is it a thing of course, that beings, guilty of such enormous ingratitude, should be ungrateful to each other, whenever this conduct will serve a purpose. 'He that is unjust, will (in this sense) be unjust still; and he that is filthy, will be filthy still.'

In this manner are explained the monstrous iniquities which filled the heathen world. These evils commenced in their religion. They forsook Jehovah, and had 'other gods before him;' gods of all kinds, natures, and descriptions. A rational mind, sufficiently astonished at their defection from the true God, is lost in amazement while contemplating the objects which they actually worshipped. No being, real or imaginary, was excluded from a list of their deities, or prevented from the homage of their devotions, by any degree of stupidity, folly, or wickedness. They worshipped blocks; they worshipped brutes; they worshipped men, usually the worst of men; they worshipped devils.

Their religion in all its solemn services was exactly suited to the character of their gods. Beyond measure was it stupid, silly, impure, and depraved. It was replete with enormous and unnatural cruelty. Specimens of this wickedness, and those innumerable are found in the various kinds of torture en-

joined as a religious penance for their sins ; and in the sacrifice of human victims, adopted as expiations for the guilt of their surviving countrymen. Among these, youths of the noblest birth, the brightest talents, and the most promising character, were in several nations butchered by hundreds, to satisfy the vengeance of their gods. In Hindostan, beside other human victims, twenty thousand women are declared, with unquestionable evidence, to be even now offered up annually, as victims to religion, on the funeral piles of their deceased husbands. Equally replenished was this religion with wonderful *falsehood*. All the oracles, divinations, visions, dreams, and prophecies of heathenism were a mere collection of lies. The same spirit of falsehood pervaded their mythology, their mysteries, their doctrines, their worship, and the means of preserving it. As their religion had no foundation in reason or revelation, they were in a sense compelled, if it was to be preserved at all, to resort to fraud and delusion for the means both of supporting the worship itself, and the authority of those who prescribed it, among the infatuated worshippers. Thus ‘the gods of the heathen were vanity and a lie : they that made them were like unto them ; and so was every one who put his trust in them.’ Nor was this scheme less deformed by *pollution*. In Egypt, Syria, Paphos, Babylon, and Hindostan, particularly, both matrons and virgins were religiously consecrated to impurity.

By the cruelty, falsehood, and pollution acted *here*, the heathen nations were effectually prepared to perpetuate the same wickedness *elsewhere*. Here it was sanctioned by religion ; the mind therefore could not consider it as very criminal elsewhere. As all were thus taught, these nations became generally corrupted beyond every thing which the most sanguine imagination could have conceived.

All this, however, is naturally the result of idolatry. That which is the object of religious worship, is of course the most sublime and perfect ob-

ject which is realized by the devotee. When this object therefore is low, debased, impure ; when it is fraught with falsehood, injustice, and cruelty ; sunk as it is immeasurably below the proper character of a god, it still keeps its station of superiority ; and is still regarded with the reverence, due to the highest known object of contemplation. Of consequence, all things beside sink with it ; and hold a station in the eye of the mind proportionally depressed. The mind itself particularly, being destitute of any higher conceptions than those which respect this debased object, conforms all its views, affections, and conduct to the character of its deity, and, while it worships him with a mixture of folly and wickedness, it extends the same folly and wickedness in its various conduct towards all other beings with which it corresponds. Thus a debased god becomes the foundation of a debased religion, and a debased religion of universal turpitude of character.

4. *Hence we see, that the Scriptures represent idolatry justly, and annex to it no higher punishment than it deserves.*

The debased and miserable character which I have described was the real character of the Canaanites. They were guilty of all these iniquities, and were therefore justly the objects of the divine indignation. Infinitely remote from that innocence attributed to them by infidels, they had grown worse and worse, under the ordinary influence of idolatry, from the beginning. At length their iniquity became full, and they were wiped away as a blot, as a stain upon the creation of God.

The same things are, with some qualifications, true of the Israelites. In the progress of their various defections to idolatry, they became corrupted in the same dreadful manner ; were guilty of the same impurity, cruelty, and falsehood ; butchered each other without remorse ; were disloyal, rebellious, treacherous ; followed abandoned villains, to overturn the government established by God himself ; waged furious civil wars with each other ; and

made their sons pass through the fire unto Moloch. God, with wonderful patience and mercy, waited long, and sent many prophets to reclaim them; yet nothing cured them of their idolatry but their final overthrow, and their deportation to Babylon.

What is true of these nations with regard to this subject, is true of the heathen in general. All the nations who have been devoted to idolatry have addicted themselves to these and all other crimes, and have been dreadfully depraved in their whole moral character. Wherever men of discernment and integrity have resided among such nations, and given an account of them to the public, this melancholy truth has, notwithstanding all the allegations of infidels to the contrary, been evinced beyond every decent denial, or reasonable doubt.

5. *These observations teach us the wisdom and goodness of God in separating the Jews from mankind, as a peculiar people to himself.*

All the preceding experiments which had been made in the providence of God, for the purpose of preserving in this corrupted world the knowledge and worship of Jehovah, had failed of accomplishing the end. God had revealed himself in an immediate and extraordinary manner to our first parents, and to their descendants through many generations. All these also he had planted in a world which, though under the curse, retained still so much of its original nature, and was fraught with so many blessings, as to continue the life of man through a thousand years. Under this dispensation 'all flesh corrupted his way upon the earth.' The world 'was filled with violence,' and became so universally profligate, that 'it repented the Lord that he had made man.' The deluge then emptied it of its inhabitants, to sweep away wickedness, which could no longer be endured, from under the whole heaven. Even this did not cure the evil. The same spirit, notwithstanding the remembrance of this terrible destruction, revived almost immediately among the descendants of Noah, and at the time when Abraham was called, all na-

tions were on the point of losing the knowledge of the one, living, and true God. Had not the Jews been separated from the rest of mankind, and by mercies and miracles of a singular nature recalled, from time to time, to the worship of Jehovah, this glorious being would long since have been forgotten in the world. We ourselves, and all the inhabitants of this happy land, should now have been bowing ourselves to stooks, offering up our children as victims to Moloch, and prostituting ourselves and our families in religious and regular pollution before the shrines of idolatry. The only knowledge, the only worship of Jehovah at this day existing in the world is derived ultimately from the revelation which he made of himself to the Jews, and the various dispensations by which it was preserved.

6. We learn hence also the malignant nature of Atheism.

Atheism, like idolatry, is infinitely remote from being a mere innocent speculation, a mere set of harmless opinions. In its very nature it involves the grossest falsehood, injustice, and ingratitude; and is, of course, the parent of all other sins in all possible degrees. The mind in which it exists must, in order to the reception of it, have become the seat of wonderful depravity, and is prepared by it for every conceivable perpetration. I do not deny, that an atheist may live decently in the world. But, whenever this is the fact, he lives in this manner, solely because the commission of the several crimes to which he finds a temptation is accompanied by some apprehended danger, some serious difficulty, or some painful inconvenience; some evil so great, as to overbalance the pleasure which he expects from committing the crime. But he never lives in this manner from principle, never from the want of disposition to sin. Let it be barely convenient and safe for him, and there is no iniquity which his head will not contrive, his heart cherish, and his hands carry into execution. From an atheist no man, no people, no human interest can ever be safe, unless

when danger to himself preserves them from the effects of his profligacy.

7. *We see with what exact propriety the Scriptures have represented the violation of our immediate duty to God as the source of all other sin.*

Impiety is plainly the beginning, the fountain of guilt, from which flows every stream. Those who are thus false, unjust, and ungrateful to God, will of course exhibit the same conduct with respect to their fellow-creatures. Virtue is a single, indivisible principle, *operating as virtue* towards every being with whom it is concerned; towards God, towards our neighbour, and towards ourselves. Towards all it operates alike; producing in every case the fruits of virtue, *viz.* virtuous affections and virtuous conduct. As the obligations to be virtuous towards God, or, in other words, to be pious, are the highest possible, so he who is insensible to these obligations, and violates these, will be insensible to all other obligations, and violate them also. The apprehension, that virtue can exist partially, that is, that we can be disposed to perform our duty towards God and not towards man, or towards man and not towards God, is chimerical; the result of ignorance or inconsideration, and unsupported either by facts or arguments.

External virtue, as it is sometimes called, that is, moral goodness, supposed to exist in external conduct only, and unsupported by virtue in the heart, is a mere dream, a mere shadow. Instead of virtue, it is nothing but convenience, nothing but a pretence, nothing but a cheat. Virtue is inherent in the soul, in the disposition, as light and warmth in the sun-beams; and is the energy of an intelligent being voluntarily directed to that which is right and good. If piety therefore be not found in a man, he has no pretensions to virtue of any kind.

Such is the scheme of the Scriptures. How plainly is it true! In laying the foundation of virtue here now evidently have they laid the only possible foundation! And how strongly do they approve themselves

to the conscience, as truth, and as deserving the character of a revelation from God! At the same time, how evidently are all other schemes of morality visionary and vain; buildings erected on sand, and destined from the beginning to a speedy and final overthrow.

SERMON CI.

THE LAW OF GOD. THE DECALOGUE.

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT.

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, nor any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow thyself down to them, nor serve them; for I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.—
 EXOD. xx. 4—6.

THE command in the text differs from that which was considered in the preceding Discourse, in this manner. That forbade the acknowledgment of *false gods, universally*; this prohibits the worship of *idols*; or *idolatry*, properly so called. All worship rendered to false gods is not uncommonly styled idolatry; but the name, in the strict sense, is applicable to the worship of idols only; or of those images, pictures, and other symbols, which were considered by the heathen as representatives of their gods.

In the preceding Discourse I observed, that the duty enjoined in the first command is of such a nature, that, to a mind governed by the dictates of reason, an express injunction of it would seem in great measure unnecessary, if not altogether super-

fluuous. Of the command in the text it may with equal propriety be observed, that to such a mind no precept given in the Scriptures could seem more unnecessary, or more superfluous. Nothing to the eye of reason can appear more wonderful, or more improbable, than that beings endowed with intelligence should bow themselves before the stock of a tree, or acknowledge an image molten or carved by themselves, as an object of their worship. Experience has, however, in the most ample manner refuted these very natural and very obvious dictates of reason; and has shewn, to the everlasting disgrace of the human name, that not only some, but almost all men have, throughout most ages of the world, prostrated themselves before these miserable objects; and in their conversation, their books, their laws, and their religious services, acknowledged them as their gods. The importance, the absolute necessity, of this command, therefore, are evinced beyond every reasonable question.

The observations, which I propose to make concerning it, I shall comprise under the following heads:—

I. *The history of idol worship;*

II. *Its extent;*

III. *The manner in which it has been performed.*

I. *I will recite to you a brief and very general history of idol worship.*

We are not informed in the Scriptures of the precise time in which idolatry commenced. It is, however, abundantly evident, that it began not long after the deluge. According to the chronology commonly received, Abraham was born in the year 1997 before Christ, and in the year of the world 2008; three hundred and fifty-two years after the flood, and two years only after the death of Noah. Early as this date is, the ancestors of Abraham seem to have been idolaters for several generations. Joshua, in a solemn assembly of the tribes of Israel at Shechem, addressed the principal men of that nation after the following manner; ‘ Thus saith the Lord

God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood, in old time ; even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nahor ; and they served other gods.' From this passage it appears, that Terah himself was, in the early periods of life, worshipper of false gods. In the fifth chapter of the book of Judith, the following account is given of this subject, in a speech of Achior, commander of the host of the Ammonites, to Holofernes, general of the Assyrian army. ' This people are descended of the Chaldeans ; and they sojourned heretofore in Mesopotamia, because they would not follow the gods of their fathers, which were in the land of Chaldea. For they left the way of their ancestors, and worshipped the God of heaven, whom they knew : so they cast them out from the face of their gods ; and they fled into Mesopotamia, and sojourned there many days.' This story, which was probably traditional among the Jews and neighbouring nations, and is not improbably true, informs us, that Terah, and his children with him, worshipped the true God, before they quitted Ur of the Chaldees ; and that they were driven out from this, their original residence, by their countrymen, because they had addicted themselves to the worship of Jehovah. It would seem, therefore, that the Chaldeans had already become such bigots to the worship of their gods, as to persecute Terah and his family for dissenting from what had become their established religion. This event took place, four hundred and twenty-two years only after the deluge. Gentilism, therefore, or the worship of false gods, must have commenced many years before this date ; both because it was the religion of Abraham's ancestors, and because it had become so universal in Chaldea, as to be the foundation of a national persecution of Terah and his family.

Sir William Jones has, I think, in the most satisfactory manner, proved that the system of Gentilism among all the ancient nations, who adopted it, was the same. This remarkable fact, if admitted, fur-

wishes unanswerable evidence that it was derived from a single source. For it is impossible that different and distant nations should have severally invented so complicated a system ; comprising so many gods, having the same names, having the same fabulous history of their origin and character, worshipped with the same numerous and diversified rites, and having the same various and peculiar offices assigned to them. The best account of this extraordinary fact which I have met with is contained in Bryant's Analysis of the Ancient Heathen Mythology. This learned and able writer has, in my view, rendered it highly probable that this religion was begun by the Cushites, or that mixed multitude, who attached themselves to Nimrod, according to the common chronology, about the year of the world 1750 ; and formed themselves, seven years after, into a nation, or body politic, under his dominion. These people, in their dispersion, spread over many parts of the earth ; and by their enterprise, heroism, arts, and ingenuity, appear to have had the first great and controlling influence over the affairs of men, both secular and religious ; an influence, the effects of which wonderfully remain at the present time.

The objects and the rites of worship adopted by these people seem almost all to have been found in the history of the deluge, of Noah, and of his family. At first, they probably intended only to commemorate, in a solemn manner, this awful and disastrous event, and the wonderful preservation of this family. That a man of so excellent and extraordinary a character ; a man singled out by the voice of God from a world, on account of his piety ; a man, who was the only pious head of a family, amidst all the millions of the human race ; a man, who had survived the ruins of one world, and begun the settlement and population of another ; a man, who had been miraculously preserved from a universal deluge ; a man, to whom the postdiluvians owed all their religion, their knowledge, their arts, and even their existence ;

should be commemorated with singular feelings, particularly with singular veneration, was a thing of course. Equally natural and necessary was it, that the most solemn remembrance should be retained and expressed of such an amazing event as the destruction of a world. High veneration for any being easily slides, in such minds as ours, into religious reverence; especially when it is publicly and solemnly expressed by ceremonies of an affecting and awful nature. When Noah particularly, and his sons generally, had been often, and for a series of years, commemorated in this manner, the history of man has amply taught us that it was no strange thing to find them ultimately raised to the rank and character of deities. This event would naturally take place the sooner, on account of the astonishing facts included in their singular history. The imagination, wrought up to enthusiasm and terror while realizing the astonishing scenes through which they had passed, could hardly fail to lend its powerful aid towards this act of canonization; and would, without much reluctance, attribute to them a divine character. If we remember how much more willingly mankind have ever worshipped false gods than the true one, we shall, I think, without much hesitation, admit the probability of the account which has here been given concerning this subject.

The proofs that the authors of Gentilism had a primary reference to Noah, his family, and their history, appear to me to be complete in the different symbols, ceremonies, objects of commemoration, and names of persons and things, together with the whole mythological history of this subject. Multitudes of allusions are found in all these things to Noah himself, his three sons, the number of his family, their singular history, the deluge, the ark, the dove, the olive branch, and various other particulars. Many of these are too explicit to be mistaken; and many others less explicit, yet taken together, and in connexion with these, corroborate, with no small force the account which has here been given.

When this scheme was once begun, it was a thing, of course, that it should be rapidly progressive. When mankind had departed from the true God, it was natural for a restless imagination to multiply the objects of its dependance and worship. Among the objects which would easily engross the religious attention of these people, and of all who were inclined to their system, the sun, moon, and stars, would undoubtedly be some of the first. The exaltation, splendour, immutability, and beneficial influence of these glorious luminaries are so affecting to the human mind, as to hold always a distinguished place in its contemplations. Nothing visible is more fitted to excite sublime emotions, or to awaken curiosity and astonishment, nor, when God was once forgotten, to inspire religious reverence. Accordingly we find, that before the days of Job the worship of the heavenly bodies had become extensive. This divine writer* says, chap. xxxi. 26—28, ‘If I beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness; and my heart hath been secretly enticed, or my mouth hath kissed my hand; this also were an iniquity to be punished by the judge: for I should have denied the God that is above.’ Job probably lived between one thousand six hundred, and one thousand seven hundred years before Christ, or about three hundred and fifty years after the birth of Abraham, according to the common chronology. With this account of the early worship of these celestial objects, profane history entirely accords.

But the mind was unsatisfied even with these deities. The business of multiplying them was carried on with astonishing rapidity. The worship of deceased men had already been rendered to Noah and his family. This was soon extended to others, and then to others still, in such a manner, that the number soon became enormous. Hesiod informs us, that the *δαίμονες*, or *dæmons*, who appear to have been no other than departed men, and who were supposed

* I consider Job as the author of this book.

to inhabit the middle regions between earth and heaven, amounted to more than thirty thousand. In opposition to these *deceased* beings, God is especially called in the sacred volume the *living* God.* From deceased men the transition was easy to animals, to vegetables, to inanimate objects, and to the visionary beings of imagination. Gods were soon found every where ; in mountains, rivers, springs, the ocean, the earth, the winds, light, darkness, groves, and generally in every thing which was particularly interesting to the fancy.

Among the reasons, which influenced the mind to this restless and endless creation of deities, the first place is due, perhaps, to the apprehension that this conduct was *an evidence of peculiar piety* ; and therefore a direct mode of obtaining blessings from some or other of the objects worshipped. Another reason was, the *complaisance of one nation to another*, which led them to adopt their respective deities. The objects of worship were, to a great extent, the same in different nations ; yet, being called by different names, and worshipped with ceremonies, differing in some degree at least, according to the diversity of manners in different nations, they came, at length, to be considered as different gods. The Athenians, under the influence of both these causes, appear to have adopted most of the deities of whom they had any knowledge.

Another reason for this conduct, judiciously assigned by Dr. Blair, is the tendency of the human imagination to lend *animation, thought, and agency* to the several inanimate objects with which it is conversant, and by which it is strongly affected ; particularly to those which are solemn, awful, and sublime. The transition from the personification of these objects, to the belief that they are really animated by an indwelling conscious principle, and to a subsequent religious reverence for them, is neither unnatural nor difficult after the mind has once be-

* Farmer on Miracles.

come devoted to idolatry. In the early stages of society the *imagination* is eminently strong, active, and susceptible. Always ready to admire, to be astonished, to be transported, it easily acquires an ascendancy over the *reason*, then always weak; and, together with *the passions*, directs almost the whole conduct of man.

It is scarcely credible, that the human mind originally worshipped inanimate objects *directly*. The absurdity of believing that that which had no life in itself, and therefore no agency nor consciousness, could hear prayers, or answer them, could be gratified with praises or sacrifices, could inflict judgments, or confer benefits, is so palpable, that even a savage can hardly be supposed to have admitted it. Much less can those people have admitted it who appear to have been the originators of idolatry. So far were the Cushites from being savages, that they appear to have been the most enlightened and enterprising of the human race at the time when Gentilism commenced. It is highly probable, that all these objects were at first regarded as peculiar manifestations of the real Deity; fitted especially to display his attributes to man, and to make the most forcible impressions of his agency. In process of time, however, they began to be considered, especially by the ignorant multitude, as being really gods; and the worship originally addressed to a being supposed to be manifested by the symbol, seems ultimately to have been rendered to the symbol itself. The stock and the stone, intended at first to bring the real Deity before the senses, took at length the place of that Deity, and became in the end ~~the~~ real objects of worship.

It is evident, from several ancient writers quoted by Shuckford,* particularly Clemens Alexandrinus, Herodian, and Pausanias, that *pillars of stone*, and

* See Shuckford's Sacred and Profane History Connected, vol. i. p. 315, edit. 1819, published by W. Baynes and Son, Paternoster Row, London.

after them *rude blocks of wood*, were the *first symbols* made by mankind of their several deities. Such, it is supposed, were the *teraphim* of Laban, stolen from him by his daughter; and such, plainly, were the religious symbols formed at early periods by the Greeks, and some other nations. Stones in their native, rude state, such, for example, as that erected by Jacob at Bethel, seem extensively to have been set up, at early periods, with various religious views and designs, by the worshippers of the true God. The pillars devoted to idolatrous purposes seem to have been derived from these. They were not, however, long satisfied with these unsightly objects. The Egyptians appear to have had carved images devoted to the purposes of religion, and, without any doubt, molten ones also, before the time of Moses; for we find the children of Israel forming a molten calf at the foot of Mount Sinai. The practice of forming idols in this manner being once begun, seems to have spread with great rapidity among the nations who maintained a mutual correspondence. In the more distant and insulated colonies of men their existence began at much later periods. In Italy, all visible symbols of the Deity were prohibited by Numa Pompilius; and were not introduced into Rome, according to the testimony of Plutarch, so late as one hundred and seventy years after the building of that city, that is, A. M. 3426, in the time of Nebuchadnezzar. Among the savages of this country images seem to have been little used.

II. *I shall now make a few observations concerning the extent of idol worship.*

The system of Gentilism commenced, as has been already remarked, in the plain of Shinar. The Cushites, who were the authors of it, reled for a short period most of their brethren in the neighbouring countries. Soon after the confusion of languages, an event which seems to have been chiefly confined to them and their associates, and which entirely disqualified them for all the efforts depending on union and concert, they began to disperse into different

parts of the earth. Speedily after this they appear to have been attacked by their brethren of the family of Shem, settled in Nineveh and its neighbourhood, and heretofore reduced under their dominion. On this occasion the Cushites were completely routed, and forced to fly with great expedition into different parts of the earth. One body of them fled into Hindostan; in the records of which country, various events of their history are still found. Another made their way into Canaan, where they were again attacked by the same people under the command of Chedorlaomer, and again overthrown. Hence they fled into Egypt, the western parts of Arabia, and the northern and eastern parts of Abyssinia. From Egypt they were again driven; and went into Phoenicia, the Lesser Asia, Greece, Thrace, Italy, and other countries bordering on the Mediterranean and Euxine seas. Whithersoever they went, they carried with them their enterprise, arts, learning, and religion. Most of the countries in which they settled embraced their idolatry at early periods. At a very early period we find it the religion of the ancestors of Abraham in Chaldea. These were descendants of Shem, who outlived Abraham himself; and who, with all his piety and authority, was still unable to prevent this senseless desertion of the true religion. In Hindostan also it spread at a very early date; as it did also in the western countries of Asia, in Egypt, and most or all of the eastern parts of Europe. The worship of the true God was, however, not universally renounced, until many ages after the commencement of Gentilism. Melchisedec, Job, his friends, and undoubtedly many of his countrymen, the people of the Thebais, or Upper Egypt, and probably many others in different parts of the world, still retained the true religion, long after idolatry had been embraced by a great portion of the human race. After the settlement of the Israelites in Canaan we find few traces of the true religion. We are not, however, to suppose it to have been wholly banished from all other countries till some

time afterward. The precise period when the whole world, beside the Jews, became idolatrous I am unable to determine.

In the fourth century after the birth of Christ a new kind of idolatry, or rather idolatry in a new form, began to exist in the Christian church. This was *the worship of saints and angels*, and afterward of *images, pictures, relics*, and other fantastical objects of devotion. This idolatry, though at first vigorously opposed by the body of the church, and afterward by individuals and small collections of men, spread speedily over the whole of Christendom, and was adopted both by the learned and unlearned of every country. Thus in one form or another the worship of false gods has prevailed throughout most of the inhabited world, and the greatest part of the reign of time. I shall now,

III. *Make a few observations on the manner in which this worship has been performed.*

I have already mentioned *idols*, as being intended originally to be *means* of worshipping God ; *symbols* of the Divine character and attributes, designed to impress them powerfully on the senses, and thus to excite in the mind animated sentiments of awe and devotion. Beside the use of these images, Gentilism copied closely in its worship the ritual originally enjoined by God, and adopted in the pure worship. Prayers, praises, sacrifices, and oblations were all offered to its various deities. Fastings, ablutions, and penance of many kinds, were enjoined on their infatuated votaries. Temples were erected to them, altars built, shrines formed, and regular orders of priests established, and consecrated to an exclusive performance of their religious services. Oracles also, which were sometimes pretended expressions of the will of these gods concerning the immediate duties of men, and sometimes professed predictions of future events, were delivered in most, or all, of the countries where idolatry prevailed. The victims offered were to a great extent the same which were prescribed in the law of Moses ; probably the same

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which had been offered from the beginning ; for we find Noah, immediately after the deluge, ‘ offering of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, burnt-offerings on the altar’ which he had made. It well deserves to be remarked, that in all the records of heathen worship which have come down to us, the votaries appear neither to have asked nor given thanks for *moral good*. Secular enjoyments of every kind they universally solicited ; but goodness of heart seems never to have been thought of as a gift coming from the gods. Accordingly Cicero, who must have been well acquainted with this subject, says, ‘ Who ever thanked the gods for his virtue ?’

Processions seem also to have been extensively used as a part of the religious ceremonial of Gentilism. These, together with the magnificence of its temples, the costliness of its images, and the pomp of its services, were all intended to affect the senses in the deepest manner. Indeed, nothing else could be done to keep this system alive. Argument was only hostile to it. The light of sound reason would have dispelled its darkness in a moment. But the senses, and through them the imagination, could be strongly addressed ; and these could entirely govern the man.

To add to the splendour of all the other objects connected with this service, and to render the oblation more affecting to the suppliant, as well as more acceptable to the deity, offerings of every kind were made more and more expensive. Gold, silver, gems, the choicest aromatics, and unguents and essences made of them, still more precious than gold itself, were frequent presents to the gods of idolatry. Hecatombs were early substituted for single victims ; and, to render the worship still more propitiatory, these were soon exchanged for human sacrifices. To complete the efficacy of the oblation, these sacrifices were selected from the brightest and most promising youths of the nation, the sons of the noble and the princely, and infants in the most lovely and endearing period of life. Victims of this kind also were

multiplied to a wonderful degree. Twenty thousand human beings are supposed to have expired annually on the altars of Mexico alone; and all these were offered up with circumstances of cruelty and horror which, but for the most indubitable testimony, would transcend belief. To these dreadful services, violating every feeling of humanity, but wonderfully affecting the imagination, were added ablutions, burdensome on account of their frequency, and often on account of the great distance of the sacred waters from the residence of the suppliant; and various kinds of penance, terrible and excruciating in their nature, and overwhelming by their duration, were customarily added. Thus, though reason and humanity were wounded and prostrated, the imagination was completely possessed by the demons of superstition; and miserable man, voluntarily losing the government of himself, became the sport of fiends and furies, and fitted only for the gloom and chains of Bedlam.

With the same design, and under the same impulse, mankind sought the most solitary and the most awful recesses for the celebration of their religious rites.* In dark and lonely groves, on the summits of lofty eminences, and in the depths of awful caverns, the most solemn rites of Gentile worship were performed at early periods. These scenes of stillness, solitude, and terror, were perfectly suited to rouse the imagination to ecstasy, and to enhance the gloomy fervours of their religion. To them succeeded temples of astonishing magnificence, exhausting in their erection the wealth of nations, and the labour of ages. These also were ornamented within and without with every thing which riches, ingenuity, and art could supply, or which was calculated to impress the mind of the votary with astonishment, religious awe, and profound reverence for the beings to whom these structures were consecrated.

It cannot, I think, be necessary for me to employ

* See Maurice's *Antiquities*, vol. ii.

any arguments for the purpose of enforcing the prohibition in the text on the minds of my audience. The importance of it to the Jews at the time when it was given, and to the great body of mankind, both before and since, is abundantly evident from the observations which have been already made. But in this land, and in the present state of religious society here, no transgression is less likely to exist than that which is forbidden in this passage of Scripture. Instead of attempting to enforce this precept, therefore, on those who hear me, I shall employ the remaining time in making a few practical

REMARKS.

1. *How degrading, melancholy, and sinful a character is here presented to us of man.*

This subject, perhaps more than any other, holds out to our view a wonderful exhibition of the depravity of the human heart. What sight can be more strange, more humiliating, more debasing to an intelligent nature, than that of rational and immortal minds, originally virtuous as they came from the hand of God, destined to the possession of endless life, and formed for such noble and sublime purposes, prostrating themselves not only before the sun, and moon, and 'the host of heaven,' but before men, evil spirits, visionary beings, animals, vegetables, blocks of wood, and figures of stone! All these beings such minds have converted into deities; and, falling down before them, have said unto them, 'Deliver us; for ye are our gods.' Is it not beyond measure amazing, to see a human being, a rational, immortal being, go into a forest, cut down a tree, transport it home on a waggon, burn one part of it on his hearth, hew and carve another part of it into an idol, and call it a god! Is it not amazing to see such a man confessing himself inferior to a stock fashioned by his own hands, acknowledging his dependance on it for life, his blessings, and his hopes, placing his trust in it, building to it temples, erecting altars, and offering up to it prayers and praises! Is it not more amaz-

ing, to behold the same man sacrificing living victims to a mass of wood, rational victims, nay more, youths of the noblest families, the brightest talents, and the fairest hopes ; nay, more still, his own beloved offspring, the children of his own bowels !

What shall we say, then, what shall we not say when we behold kings, heroes, and sages employed in this manner ? When we see towns, provinces, countries, and continents, nay, the whole earth, all uniting in this infatuated worship, with a universal forgetfulness of Jehovah, the Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor of all beings ; notwithstanding the hourly demonstration of his perfections and agency in the visible universe !

Still more astonished ought we to be, if we can be more astonished, to see the Israelites, after all the wonders of Egypt, Sinai, and Canaan, in the midst of all the marvellous blessings given to their nation, with the word of God in their hands, while his prophets were daily announcing to them his revelations, while his awful oracles from the mercy-seat were still sounding in their ears, within his temple, before his altar, and beneath the awful splendour of the Shechinah, ‘ forgetting the God that made them, and lightly esteeming the rock of their salvation ;’ wandering after the idolatry of the heathen, bowing before their gods, partaking in their sacrifices, absorbed in their follies, and embracing their wickedness with all their heart.

To complete this dreadful picture of human depravity, the whole Christian world, with few, very few exceptions, was, for many centuries, buried and lost in this stupid, shameful, monstrous worship. The progeny of Noah, who began this unnatural defection from their Creator, became idolaters while the waves of the deluge had scarcely ceased to roar around this wasted world. The Jews became idolaters at the foot of Sinai, beneath the thunders of the Almighty. The Christian world became idolaters when the Redeemer was, in a sense, bleeding on the cross before their eyes. How debased, then, how

sinful, how miserable a being is man !

2. *These observations teach us the indispensable necessity of a revelation to such a world as this.*

It has been shewn that, at an early period after the flood, the whole human race lost the knowledge of the true God, and sunk into the moral stupidity and wickedness of Gentilism. That rational beings should be created or exist for any end which does not involve in it the knowledge and worship of the true God, is a doctrine indefensible by a single rational argument. What purpose could beings destitute of this knowledge and worship be supposed to answer? What purpose, I mean, which God could propose, or which he could admit as useful, as desirable, as worthy of himself? Can he be supposed to have formed rational and immortal beings to be ignorant of him, the only source of good, of wisdom, excellence, and happiness? Can he be supposed to have made such beings capable of knowing and glorifying him, for the debased and wretched end of worshipping gods of gold, silver, wood, and stone? Of worshipping them also with services deformed with falsehood, cruelty, and impurity; and attended by a total destruction of all wisdom, and all virtue? Such, however, to a vast extent has been, and such without revelation would have for ever been, the condition of mankind. Revelation only has taught and preserved the knowledge and worship of the true God in this guilty world; and Mohammedans and infidels are no less indebted to revelation for this knowledge, than are Jews and Christians.

Piety has been heretofore shewn to be the foundation of all other virtue, the first and greatest branch of this glorious subject, without which, the virtue exercised towards our fellow-creatures, and towards ourselves, cannot exist. But piety is impossible on the system of Gentilism. The great constituents of this divine affection of the heart are love, reverence, and resignation. But how can love, reverence, and resignation, be exercised to-

wards an ox, a crocodile, a cat, a frog, a fly, an onion, a stick of wood, or a block of marble? Here plainly there is nothing to be loved, revered, or regarded with resignation. In the mean time, perpetual frauds, falsehoods, cruelties, and impurities, added a total corruption of all the affections and conduct of man towards himself and his fellow-men, to the supreme debasement of his character, produced, of course, by the acknowledgment and worship of heathen gods. This system, therefore, banished moral excellence from the mind; and introduced into its place every thing that was despicable, worthless, and wicked. He, who does not see the absolute necessity of a revelation to beings situated as the inhabitants of this world were, must be voluntarily blind, and must love to be deceived. You, my hearers, are now in the house of God. You know his existence, presence, character, and agency. You are employed in his worship. You have heard the glorious tidings of forgiving, redeeming, and sanctifying love. The Redeemer of mankind, and the expiation which he has made of sin, have been announced to you from the cradle. This house is to you 'the gate of heaven.' Here the highway commences which leads to that glorious world. Immortal life here dawns upon you. A voice from amidst the throne of God invites you here, to 'take of the water of life freely.' All these blessings are brought to you by revelation. But for revelation, you would have been this day worshipping a demon or an ox, or falling down before the stock of a tree. But for revelation, you might this day have been imbruing your hands in the blood of one of your number, butchered as a miserable victim to Moloch. 'Blessing, and honour, and glory, and thanksgiving, be unto our God, for this unspeakable gift,' through Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen.

SERMON CII.

THE LAW OF GOD. THE DECALOGUE.

THE THIRD COMMANDMENT.

THE NATURE OF PROFANENESS.

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless, that taketh his name in vain.—EXOD. xx. 7.

IN the two preceding Discourses I have considered at some length the nature of the sins forbidden in the first and second commands of the Decalogue. I did not think it necessary, after the ample discussion of the duties of piety so lately delivered from this place, to dwell anew upon the same duties, as required by the former of these commands; nor, on account of the state of Christian society in this country, to insist on the prohibition contained in the latter. Considering the subjects of both as sufficiently canvassed for the design of these Discourses, I shall now proceed to examine the nature of the precept given to us in the text.

The name of God, as used in the Scriptures, has by divines of all descriptions been generally regarded as denoting his *name literally*; his *titles* of every kind; his *perfections*; and, generally, every thing by which his *character* and his *pleasure* are made known to mankind.

‘To take the name of God in vain,’ is to use all or either of these to *no valuable purpose*, or to *evil purposes*, or with *falsehood*, or with *irreverence*.

Of him who does this God declares, that ‘he will not hold him *guiltless*’; that is, that he will hold him *guilty*; especially in the great day of trial and decision.

In discoursing on this subject, I shall examine,

I. *The nature,*

II. *The guilt,*

III. *The danger of this sin*

I. I shall examine with attention the *nature of this sin.*

The nature of this sin may be advantageously unfolded by considering it as it respects the *name* and the *works* of God.

By the *name* of God, I intend the several names and titles by which he has been pleased to distinguish himself, and to manifest his character to mankind. In his *works* I shall include every thing which he has wrought, instituted, and declared, as an especial manifestation of his presence, perfections, and agency.

The name of God is profaned, that is, treated with the irreverence which is the object of the prohibition in the text,

1. *In perjury, or false swearing.*

‘Ye shall not swear by my name falsely; neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am Jehovah,’ Lev. xx. 12. To swear falsely is to *invoke God to witness a lie*. It is scarcely possible to conceive of a grosser insult to the Creator of the universe than this. He, as all men perfectly well know, infinitely loves truth, and infinitely detests falsehood; and has said, that ‘there shall in no wise enter into the heavenly city any one who loveth or maketh a lie.’ To call him then in this solemn manner to witness a falsehood, is to laugh at his love of truth, his disposition and power to support it, and that glorious purity of his character, before which ‘the heavens are unclean, and the angels charged with folly.’

2. *When the name of God is used in any light, irreverent manner, the same sin is committed.*

The most prominent and most usual modes of transgressing in this manner, are *profane cursing and swearing*. In cases of this nature, the name of God is frequently employed to accompany and enhance diversion; frequently as the means of giving vent with peculiar force to the violence of anger; often, also, is it used to aggravate denunciations of revenge; and very often dishonoured by unhallowed

lips in imprecations of evil on our fellow-men. In every one of these methods the name of God is profaned, times without number, every day.

This glorious and awful Being, as I have already observed, has all possible claims to the highest reverence. Every thing teaches us this doctrine: the creation and the providence of God, reason and revelation. It is enforced by every page of divine truth, and by every dictate of the human conscience. In a word, on all things within and without us, that glorious and fearful name, Jehovah our God, is written in sunbeams. In the same clear and luminous manner is every where displayed the indispensable duty of reverencing him with that 'fear of the Lord, which is wisdom, and that departure from evil, which is understanding.' Nor can his claims to the performance of this duty be ever relinquished.

Indeed, mankind appear almost universally to possess a clear conviction of the truth of this doctrine, and of the indispensable nature of this duty. In all ordinary circumstances the worst of men acknowledge both without hesitation, even those who most frequently and most heinously commit the sin which the doctrine prohibits. Of this sin God seems to have established in the consciences of mankind a stronger and more uniform disapprobation than of most others. In few cases of transgression is there so little disagreement as in this. Almost all other sins men labour to justify. I know not that I have ever heard any man attempt soberly to justify profaneness of this nature. He whose tongue is still vibrating with cursing and swearing, will usually acknowledge that his conduct is inexcusable. Arguments to prove the reality of this sin are therefore unnecessary.

3. *We are guilty of this sin also when we invoke the name of God lightly and irreverently in prayer, or without that seriousness, humility, and religious awe, which are indispensable to the acceptable performance of this duty.*

At all times, in all circumstances, are we required

to render to Jehovah our supreme reverence and unfeigned devotion, whenever he becomes the object of our contemplation, or our conduct. His character is always and immutably the same; infinitely great, awful, holy, and excellent. Our relation to him, also, is invariably the same, that of rational and dependant creatures. But especially is this reverence and this devotion to exist in *prayer*. In the performance of this duty, so solemn in its nature, and bringing us so near the throne of majesty and mercy, the character of God, our own inferiority, dependance, obligations, sin, guilt, danger, and infinite necessity of the divine favour and blessing, are brought up in full view, and forced home upon the heart. Here, therefore, all inducements to reverential thoughts of God, and all advantages for entertaining them, are presented to the mind. To exhibit irreverence in this case, therefore, is to break over these inducements, and sottishly to neglect these advantages. God here is not treated irreverently in the hour of inconsideration, of strong temptation, and surprising sin; but in the season of seriousness, and professed devotion. We worship God acceptably, when we worship him 'with reverence and godly fear.' 'God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of his saints, and to be had in reverence by all them that are about him.' The same spirit is in the same manner demanded in our private and secret devotions. When, therefore, the mind regards its Maker in this act of devotion with lightness and irreverence, it is not only clear that it is guilty of the sin forbidden in the text, and of great sin, but it is fearfully probable, when this is habitually its conduct, that it is at all times the subject of a general spirit of profanation.

4. *A still more heinous transgression, of the same nature, is using the name of God irreverently in the solemn act of dedicating the soul to him in the covenant of grace.*

In this, the most solemn transaction in which man is ever concerned on this side of the grave, all things even some which are not applicable to the taking of

an oath, or the duty of prayer, conspire in the highest degree to make it affecting to the mind. The day, the place, the occasion, the transaction, are invested with peculiar solemnity by their very nature. A pre-eminent solemnity, also, is thrown upon this transaction by the character of the person immediately concerned; a sinner, professedly restored to the divine favour; the subject of dedication, an immortal mind; the Being to whom the dedication is made, a pardoning God; the means by which the worshipper has been permitted thus to dedicate himself, the righteousness of the Redeemer; the ends for which he thus offers himself up, the glory of God and his own eternal salvation. All these things united, plainly render this the most interesting transaction in which the soul is ever engaged in the present world. To act lightly and irreverently then in a concern so solemn, so eminently affecting, is to be profane against all inducements to our duty; against some not existing in any other religious service. In this conduct, all these most sacred things, God, Christ, the work of redemption, forgiving love, the sabbath, the sanctuary, the restoration and salvation of the soul, are, if it be done deliberately and with understanding, treated with the grossest contempt, and the most impious mockery. In deliberate conduct of this nature, the mind proves itself to be depraved altogether beyond the common measure; and the 'conscience' is evidently not far from being 'seared, as with a hot iron.'

Generally, he who regards God with levity and irreverence in any religious service whatever, when this irreverence is directed immediately towards his character, is guilty of profaneness in the mode specified under the second head. In other words he is guilty of profaneness of the same nature, and existing substantially under the same form, with that which is found in *profane cursing and swearing*. The irreverence, which constitutes the peculiar guilt of this latter sin exists also in the former, and in both is immediately directed against God himself. Both

therefore are justly considered as cases of the same nature.

As this sin respects the *works* of God, or, in other words, whatever he has *done, declared, or instituted*, the profaneness, whenever it exists, is exactly the same in its nature, but different in the mode of its existence, from that exhibited under the former general head. In all instances included under that head, it is directed against God *immediately*; but *mediately* in those now referred to; the irreverence being pointed immediately against the *works themselves*, and through them against their *Author*.

God is often treated with irreverence,

1. *In the works of creation and providence.*

The works of creation and providence are merely manifestations of their Author. In all of them his character is more or less visible; his wisdom, power, and goodness; his self-existence and independence; his omnipresence and omnipotence; his omniscience and immutability. These perfections are so clearly and so extensively manifested in his works, that, without more than common stupidity, we cannot be ignorant of them. Of consequence, we clearly perceive them to be the works of God; and whenever we complain of them, or murmur at them, or despise them, or ridicule them, the complaints, the murmurs, the contempt, and the ridicule are intended ultimately, not against the works themselves, but against their Author. No man ever thought of treating in this manner inanimate objects, or mere events. He who made these objects and controls these events is the only being against whom the irreverence is intentionally directed. This is so obviously true that probably it was never seriously questioned.

The same sin is committed in the same manner whenever we assert or insinuate that these works were made to no end, or to no end worthy of their Author. In such a case the character of God is profanely impeached through his works; because we accuse him of weakness and folly. No folly can be

more conspicuous than that which is visible in doing any thing, and especially very great things, without any end in view, or without any such end, as is suited to the splendour of the apparatus, or the character of the workman. Of this folly in the case before us we accuse God.

Profaneness of an exactly similar nature is practised when, in considering the works of God, we intentionally or negligently keep his *agency* out of view, and attribute to second causes that which plainly belongs to the first cause. There are philosophers, and ever have been, who, through choice or carelessness, have considered the beings and events in the earth and the visible heavens as proceeding in a manner and from a cause resembling that which the heathen attributed to *fate*. Instead of supposing them to be all directed by an intelligent cause to purposes formed by unerring wisdom, and conducted regularly by that wisdom to the accomplishment of those purposes; they are regarded and spoken of as operating of themselves only, without any direction, without any end to be accomplished, without any wisdom to guide, or intelligent agency to control.

The works of God were by him intended to be, and are in fact, manifestations of himself; proofs of his character, presence, and agency. In this light he requires men continually to regard them; and to refuse this regard is considered by him as grossly wicked, and highly deserving of punishment. Accordingly, David says, Psal. xxviii. 5, 'Because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands, he shall destroy them and not build them up.' Isaiah also, chap. v. 12--14, speaking of the Jews, says, 'They regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands. Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge; and their honourable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst. Therefore, hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure; and their glory:

and their multitude, and their pomp ; and he that rejoiceth shall descend into it.'

I am apprehensive that even good men are prone to pay less attention to the works of creation and providence than piety demands, and the Scriptures require. We say and hear so much concerning the insufficiency of these works to unfold the character of God, and the nature of genuine religion, and find the truth of what we thus say and hear so clearly proved, that we are prone, not very unnaturally, to consider them as almost uninformative in moral things, and in a great measure useless to the promotion of piety. This, however, is a palpable and dangerous error. The works *alone*, without the aid of the Scriptures, would I acknowledge be far less instructive than they now are, and utterly insufficient to guide us in the way of righteousness. The Scriptures were designed to be a comment on these works ; to explain their nature, and to shew us the agency, purposes, wisdom, and goodness of God in their formation. Thus explained, thus illumined, they become means of knowledge very extensive and eminently useful. He who does not find in the various, beautiful, sublime, awful, and astonishing objects presented to us in creation and providence irresistible and glorious reasons for admiring, adoring, loving, and praising his Creator, has not a claim to evangelical piety. David did not act in this manner. All who, like David, feel the spirit of the gospel, will like him also rejoice in those works in which God himself rejoices ; will delight to contemplate them with wonder, reverence, and gratitude ; will find God every where in the works of his hands ; and, passing beyond those second causes, which are merely instruments of his agency, will see every where displayed the finger and character of the divine workman.

2. *The same irreverence is abundantly exercised towards the word of God.*

Irreverence in this particular exists in a multitude of forms and degrees, altogether too numerous to be

mentioned on this occasion. I shall select a few from this number.

(1.) *The Scriptures are not unfrequently made the object or the means of sport and jesting.* David says of himself, 'My heart standeth in awe at thy word:' and again, addressing his Maker, 'O how sweet are thy words unto my taste!' God, speaking by the prophet Isaiah, says, 'To this man will I look; even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word.'—'Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his word. He shall appear to your joy; and your brethren that hated you shall be ashamed.' Such is the character of good men; and such are the promises to those who 'tremble at the word of God.' But how different is the spirit of those who jest with this sacred and awful volume; who can find sport and merriment in the book which unfolds the infinitely great, solemn, and awful character of Jehovah; which denounces his wrath against all the workers of iniquity; which opens to our view the Redeemer of mankind on the cross; which discloses to us all the glories of heaven, and the strait and narrow way to that happy world; which presents to us the terrors of hell, with the dreadful road that leads to final perdition; and which shews us ourselves as objects of the divine indignation, in imminent danger of endless ruin, and yet as prisoners of hope, and candidates for life eternal! What can be found here to excite diversion; to become the theme of gaiety, the subject of laughter, the foundation of amusement and trifling? What must be the spirit of him who can divert himself over the grave who can make death the topic of wit; who can laugh before the bar of the final judgment, and sport with the miseries of perdition! He must, indeed, 'have forgotten the God that made him, and lightly esteem the rock of his salvation.'

(2.) *The same irreverence is exercised, when the Scriptures are neglected.* 'Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name,' Psal. cxxxviii. 2. This passage is thus paraphrased by Dr. Watts:—

‘ I’ll sing thy truth and mercy, Lord :
 I’ll sing the wonders of thy word :
 Not all thy works and names below,
 So much thy power and glory shew.’

If God then has magnified his word in this manner ; if he has rendered it the means of displaying his character so much more perfectly than the works of creation and providence ; if he has thus rendered it immensely important to mankind ; if he himself appears in it so immediately, so clearly, and so gloriously, how inexcusable must we be, if we do not regard it with the solemn concern, the deep attention, and the profound reverence, due to his infinite majesty ? But negligence of the Scriptures is the absolute prevention, the certain death, of all such emotions. What veneration can he possess for the Bible, or for the Author of it, who leaves it to moulder on a shelf ; or who reads it, when he reads it at all, with carelessness and stupidity ; who is equally regardless of its doctrines, and its precepts ; and who renders to it universally less respect than to a novel, or a play ?

(3.) *The same irreverence is exercised towards the Scriptures, when we do not duly respect their authority.* When the Scriptures are acknowledged to be the word of God, an end is put to all questions concerning the truth of their doctrines, and the reasonableness of their precepts. If they are *his* word, every thing contained in them, unless it be some error of a transcriber or printer, is true and right. Nor is this all. As ‘ all Scripture is given by inspiration of God ;’ so he has declared the whole to be ‘ profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness.’ As they are, he has declared that they are the genuine means of ‘ perfecting the man of God,’ and of ‘ furnishing him thoroughly unto every good work.’ The plain duty of all men, therefore, is carefully to understand, implicitly to believe, and exactly to obey them. If then we find some doctrines partially revealed, some mysterious and inexplicable in their nature,

and these, or others, contradicting our own pre-conceived opinions; if we doubt, or disbelieve such doctrines, because our own philosophy is unsatisfied with them, opposed to them, or unable to explain them, we wholly fail of the reverence due to him who has declared them; and, in a manner highly affrontive, to impeach his wisdom and veracity.

The Bereans 'received the word' preached by the apostles, 'with all readiness of mind:' and, to be satisfied whether it was true, did not appeal to their own reason, but to 'the Scriptures,' which they 'searched daily' for this end. All who possess the liberal and noble-minded disposition ascribed to them, will pursue exactly the same conduct; and will say with St. Paul, 'Let God be true, but every man a liar.' It was from this disposition that they *believed* in the evangelical sense, and were saved. All who possess the same spirit will share in the same faith, and the same salvation. What can be more preposterous, more indecent, more irreverential to God, than for beings 'of yesterday, who know nothing,' to question the wisdom and the truth of his declarations; and, instead of believing what he has said, upon the ground of his veracity, to insist on perceiving, before we give credit to it, the truth and reasonableness of the doctrines declared, by means of our own philosophy. To men whose sincerity we consider as proved we readily yield our belief, whenever they declare such things as they had opportunity certainly to know. God knows all things with absolute certainty. Ought he not then to be believed in whatever he is pleased to declare? Is not his veracity greater than that of men? 'If,' then, 'we receive the witness of men, the witness of God, saith St. John, 'is greater, He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar.' What wonderful irreverence is this towards God! What an impudent insult! How tremendous a profanation of his glorious character!

(4.) Of the same nature is the contempt, obloquy, and ridicule often cast upon the Scriptures. The Scrip-

tures, in instances not very unfrequent, receive this treatment from those who professedly believe them, and much more frequently from infidels. A man who has not hitherto seen sufficient evidence to prove the divine origin of the Scriptures, may be fairly considered as warranted to withhold from them his assent. At the same time, he is indispensably bound to investigate this evidence as fast and as far as he is able; and to yield himself to it whenever it is perceived, with candour and equity. But nothing can justify or even palliate the manner in which infidels have conducted their opposition to this book. There is no mode of attack which they have thought too gross to be adopted in this warfare. The frauds which they have practised upon Christianity have been without number, and without limits. All the weakness, folly, superstition, and enthusiasm inherent in the nature of man, they have charged upon its doctrines; although these very doctrines contradict and condemn them all. All the vices inwoven in the human character, all the enormities perpetrated by the pride, injustice, and cruelty of man, they have charged upon its precepts, notwithstanding these very precepts, prohibit every one of them, and threaten them universally with endless punishment. The religion itself they have regularly styled superstition, enthusiasm, and fanaticism; and have thus endeavoured to prepossess, and to a vast extent have actually prepossessed, great multitudes of mankind against it, under the mere influence of nicknames. Where they could not convince or refute, an evil which has universally attended their efforts, they have succeeded, at least equally well, by perplexing and entangling. Instead of open, direct arguments, fairly stated and fully discussed, they have insinuated doubts, started difficulties, and hinted objections, leaving the minds of the young, the ignorant, and the unskilful to embarrass themselves by dwelling upon these subjects, which they had neither learning to investigate, nor capacity to understand. In this situation, such minds are as

effectually overthrown, from a consciousness of their inability to defend themselves, as by the power of an acknowledged demonstration.

What they have been unable to effect in these modes, they have endeavoured to accomplish by wit. A book, professing to be the word of God, to communicate his will to mankind, and to disclose eternal life and eternal death to every human being, together with the terms and means by which one of these may be obtained, and the other must be suffered; a book, believed truly to sustain this character by a great part of those to whom it has been published, particularly by most of the learned, and by almost all whom their fellow-men have regarded as wise and virtuous, has unquestionable claims to be examined with solemn thought and unbiassed investigation. The question concerning its divine origin is of infinite moment to every child of Adam. He who can sport with this subject, would with the same propriety laugh while he heard the sentence of death pronounced upon him, and dance around the grave which was dug to receive him. Suppose the Scriptures are in fact the word of God; suppose the infidel at the foot of Mount Sinai; suppose he heard the trumpet sound, and the thunders roll, saw the lightning blaze, the cloud imbosom the mountain, and the flame of devouring fire reach the heavens, and perceived the earth to tremble beneath his feet; suppose the final day arrived, and the same infidel to hear the call of the archangel, the trump of God, and the shout of the heavenly host, and to see the graves open, the dead arise, the Judge descend, the plains and the mountains kindled with the final conflagration, and the 'heavens and the earth flee away;' would he be inclined to jesting, to sport, and to ridicule? The Scriptures declare themselves to be the word of the glorious Being, who spoke from Sinai, and who will again come to 'judge the quick and the dead.' The very terms by which the infidel and all his fellow-men will be tried on this dreadful day, the Scriptures profess to unfold; the very terms on which

to us are suspended both heaven and hell. Should the Scriptures be indeed the word of that God, what will become of the infidel? Should they not, what will he lose by believing them? Where, then, is the place for his sport? where the foundation for his trifling?

Could the contempt or the ridicule which he employs really affect the question, and exhibit it in any new light to the understanding of man, something at least might be pleaded in extenuation of this conduct. But ridicule, however gross the banter, or refined the wit, cannot be proof. A sneer cannot be an argument. The question, after every effort of this nature, is left just where it was; while the inquirer is ensnared, deceived, and ruined. How melancholy an employment, to destroy a soul for the sake of uttering a jest!

To complete this wretched pursuit of this wretched purpose, the infidel assaults the Scriptures with *obscenity*. In periods and places in which coarse manners prevail, when the animal side of man is left naked, and the feelings and conduct of the brute obtrude themselves without a blush, this obscenity breaks out in gross ribaldry, and the shameless dialect of the workhouse and the brothel. In more chastened society, the impurity, lest it should be too offensive, is veiled by decency of expression; steals upon the mind in an inuendo; glances at it in a hint, and peeps from behind an obscure suggestion. What a shocking mixture is here presented to the thoughts of a sober, and even of a decent man! Obscenity blended with the truths contained in the word of God! How obviously must the mind which can voluntarily, which can laboriously, unite these things, be 'the habitation of devils;' the hold of every foul spirit, and a 'cage of every unclean and hateful bird!' How irreverent, how profane, how abominable, how filthy must it appear to him, 'in whose sight the heavens are unclean!'

3. *This irreverence is, perhaps, not less exercised towards the institutions or ordinances of God*

God has instituted, as important means of displaying his own character, preserving his worship, and promoting his religion in the world, the sabbath, public and private prayer and praise; the preaching of the gospel, public and private humiliation and fasting, the church of Christ, its communion, its sacraments, and its discipline. As all these are his institutions, and seen to be his, it is obvious that irreverence towards *them* is irreverence towards *himself*; and in this manner has the subject ever been considered in the Christian world. It will be easily seen, that the various ways in which this numerous train of sacred things is profaned, are so many as to render it impracticable to specify them on the present occasion. I shall therefore attempt only to mention such as are most usual or most prominent.

The *abbath* is undoubtedly the great support of religion in the world; for wherever it is unknown or unregarded, religion is unknown. Accordingly, God has been pleased to make it the subject of one of the commands of the Decalogue. This holy day is profaned, and the author of it treated with gross irreverence, whenever it is devoted to pleasure, or to secular business; whenever we ride or walk, when neither necessity nor mercy demands; whenever we read books of amusement and diversion, or devote our conversation to any topics unsuited to the holy nature of this day. Nor is it less really profaned when we spend its sacred hours in idleness or sleep, or when in any other manner we refuse, or neglect to employ them in the great duties of religion. Equally, and more obviously, are we guilty of this profanation when we speak of the sabbath with contempt, and ridicule or laugh at others for regarding it with the reverence enjoined in the Scriptures, decry the institution as useless, as injurious to the interests of mankind, and as deserving the regard of none but weak and enthusiastic minds; or when, with direct hostility we deny its sacred nature, labour to weaken its authority, and endeavour to destroy its holy, heavenly influence on mankind. In all these

cases we impeach the wisdom, equity, or goodness of its author; declare himself, when instituting it, to have acted unworthily of himself; and, in plain language, cast contempt on *him*, as well as on his *institution*. No man ever thought of treating with contempt this holy day, considered merely as a seventh part of time; no man ever directed the shafts of ridicule at Monday. Aside from the fact, that it was instituted by God as a sacred day, the sabbath would be no more despised, and regarded with no more hostility, than any other day of the week. The hostility and contempt therefore are directed against the institution, against its sacred nature, against its holy and glorious author.

The *worship of God* is profaned whenever, for reasons plainly insufficient, we refuse to be present in his house upon the sabbath; or, when present, cordially to unite in its solemn services, or spend the time allotted to them in sleep or diversion; or when we sport with the services themselves; or when our minds rise in hostility against the faithful preaching of the gospel; or when we make the worship of God an object of our scorn and ridicule. Nor are we less really guilty of this crime, whenever we allure or persuade others to the same conduct. The worship of God was designed to be the great means of leading us to eternal life. God appears in it as a forgiving God, as a God reconcilable to sinners, as redeeming them from under the curse of the law, and as reinstamping his own image on their minds. He who will not come to meet him, when appearing in this most venerable and endearing of all characters, or who when he has come will treat him with neglect, opposition, and contempt, is guilty of an insult on the Creator, at which the stoutest heart ought to tremble. What an account of this conduct must he expect to give at the final day!

The *Christian sacraments* are not often openly profaned. The elements employed have, indeed, been touched with unhallowed hands; and the ordinances themselves have, in solitary instances, been insulted

by blasphemous mimicry. But the cases have been so rare, and have been regarded by those who knew them with such abhorrence, as scarcely to need any reprobation from me. I shall therefore only say, that, according to the first feelings of the human mind, feelings which seem never to have been materially weakened, unless by absolute profligacy, they are universally held in the most reverential estimation; and all disregard, thoughtlessness, and levity are not only by the Scriptures, but by common sense also, proscribed in our attendance upon them. If we are not wonderfully insensible, we cannot fail of exercising a profound reverence, when in this peculiarly solemn and affecting manner we draw so near to a forgiving God.

Private and secret worship is much more frequently the object of levity and contempt. Family prayer peculiarly has been attacked on all sides by loose and light-minded men; and, I doubt not, has been hunted out of many a family, and prevented from entering many others, by the sneers of scorn, and the jests of derision. Why should not men pray? Why should not families pray? Are we not dependant creatures? Do we not need every thing at the hand of God? Who beside God can supply our wants? Has he not required us to pray? If we do not pray, will he bless us? Has he not made *asking* the indispensable condition of *receiving*? The man who will not pray is a madman. The *family* which will not pray are lunatics!

God has required us to 'pray always with all prayer,' and therefore to perform regularly the duties of both private and secret devotion. When we ourselves neglect either, or when we oppose the performance of them in our fellow-men, we neglect or oppose the command of Jehovah. He who laughs and sneers at secret and family prayer, points his jests, his contempt, and his mockery against his Creator. Where can folly or frenzy be found more absolute than this? The wretch who is guilty of it is a helpless, sinful, miserable creature, dependant

for existence, for enjoyment, and for hope on the mere sovereign mercy of God; is promised all blessings which he needs if he will pray for them, and is assured that if he will not pray, he not only will be entitled to no blessings whatever, but that those which he regards as blessings, and which, if he faithfully performed this duty, would prove such, will be converted into curses. This wretch not only refuses to pray himself, but with gross impiety insults his Maker anew, by preventing his fellow-men from praying also.

I shall only add, that irreverence, the same in substance with that which has been here specified, may exist in *thought*, and in *action*, as well as in *words*. In some of the cases which I have mentioned, it has been indeed supposed to terminate in thought. It may thus terminate in all cases which do not involve our intercourse with our fellow-men. In this intercourse it may be exhibited in actions, and those of very various kinds. Of these a very few have been mentioned. It is only necessary to observe, that whenever our hearts teem with irreverent thoughts towards God, or towards any thing because it is his, it makes little difference whether we express our impiety by the tongue, or by the hands. The irreverence is the same; the design is the same; the moral action is the same. It is the rising of pride, enmity, and rebellion against God; the open, impudent contention of a creature against his Creator; the struggle, the swelling, the writhing of a worm against Jehovah!

SERMON CHIL.

THE LAW OF GOD. THE DECALOGUE.

THE THIRD COMMANDMENT.

THE GUILT OF PROFANENESS.

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless, that taketh his name in vain.--EXOD. XX 7.

In the preceding Discourse, I proposed, after making several introductory remarks, to examine,

- I. *The nature,*
- II. *The guilt,*
- III. *The danger of the sin forbidden in this command.*

The first of these I considered at length in that Discourse. I shall now proceed to make some observations concerning the second; the *guilt* of this sin. The guilt of this sin is evident,

1. *From the tenor of the command.*

Profaneness is one of the eight great crimes which God thought proper to make the express subjects of prohibition in the Decalogue. In the order in which He was pleased to speak and to write them, it holds the *third* place. All the importance which this wonderful law derived from being uttered by the voice and being written with the finger of God, from his manifest appearance in this lower world, and from the awful splendour and amazing majesty with which he appeared, this precept, equally with the others, challenges to itself. In addition to these things, it is the only precept in the whole number which annexes an express threatening to the crime which is prohibited. From all these circumstances it is abundantly evident, that the guilt of this sin is of no common dye in the sight of Jehovah. All these circumstances were intended to be significant, and are obviously significant, in a manner pre-emi-

nently solemn and affecting. How should we ourselves feel, if the Creator of the universe were to inform us by the mouth of an acknowledged prophet, that he would appear in this world on an appointed day, to publish his awful pleasure to mankind! With what anxious, trembling expectation should we wait for the destined period! With what solemnity and apprehension should we behold the day dawn! With what silent awe should we see the cloudy chariot descend, and hear the archangel proclaim the approach of his Maker! How should we shudder at the sound of the trumpet, and the quaking of the earth! Would not our 'hearts die within us,' when the thunders began to roll, the lightnings to blaze, and 'the flames of devouring fire' to rise up to the heavens! In the midst of these tremendous scenes, with what silent, deathlike amazement should we listen, to hear the voice of the Almighty! Would it not seem wonderful, would it not appear delirious, for any man to call in question the authority of his commands, or the absolute rectitude of his pleasure, to refuse the duties which he enjoined, or to perpetrate the crimes which he forbade? Who after hearing from the mouth of God the awful prohibition, 'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain,' and the fearful threatening annexed to it, 'for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who taketh his name in vain,' would not quake with terror at the very thought of committing a sin, thus alarmingly forbidden? Who would demand an argument to convince him that such a sin was eminently evil in the sight of his Maker?

2. *This sin is an immediate attack on God himself, and is therefore peculiarly guilty.*

The hostilities of mankind against any intelligent being may be carried on *mediately*, or *immediately*. *Mediately*, against his property, if he be a human being, or against his other external interests: *immediately*, against his character and person. In the same manner we may attack our Maker by attacking our fellow-creatures, and violating such commands

of his as regulate our duties to *them*; appropriately and usually styled the duties of *morality*. Or we may attack him immediately, by violating those commands which respect his person and character, and enjoin the various duties of piety. All the transgressions which I have recited are directed against objects confessedly belonging to God, and known to be *his*, in immediate possession: his name, his titles his works, his word, and his institutions. As *h* only do they become the objects of irreverence at all. In all these cases, therefore, as here described, we attack God in the most direct manner which is in our power. A king or a parent may be insulted by an affront offered immediately to his officer, his messenger, or any other acting under his authority. No person will deny the affront here to be real, nor, as the case may be, to be very serious. Still it was probably never questioned, that when this same affront was offered directly to the parent or the king himself, it became far more gross, an insult of greater magnitude, and greater guilt. Accordingly, such affronts have been always more seriously resented, and more severely punished.

In all the cases mentioned in the preceding Discourse God is necessarily and most solemnly present to the mind of man. Whatever impiety, therefore, whatever irreverence, whatever profaneness, is exhibited in these cases, is directed immediately against him; against his character, against his person. He, who is the subject of it, 'stretcheth out his hand against God, and strengtheneth himself against the Almighty. He runneth on him, even on his neck; upon the thick bosses of his buckler.' How can the man who is summoned to take a solemn oath, who is employed in the eminently solemn duty of prayer, or in the pre-eminently solemn duty of dedicating himself to God in the covenant of peace, fail to have a lively and affecting sense of the presence of his Maker! How can he fail to realize, that all the levity, thoughtlessness, insincerity, and irreverence of which he is guilty, is levelled directly against

God! Who else is, who else can be, the object of this conduct? Who else is concerned with it? Whose name is here mocked? Whose institutions are set at nought? If the criminal be weak enough to suspect that he is not in this case trifling with his Maker and wickedly profaning his glorious name, he is probably the only being in the universe sufficiently bewildered to adopt this unsound and unhappy opinion.

What is true of these acts of worship is true with little variation of every other.

In that light-minded use of the names and titles of God which is appropriately called profaneness, the circumstances are, I acknowledge, in some respects materially different. It seems wonderful, indeed, that whenever the name of God is mentioned, any mind should not be filled with awe, and affectingly realize the presence of this majestic being. The Jews would not pronounce the incommunicable name, Jehovah, except in one peculiarly solemn act of religious worship. Such of the Mohammedans as cannot read carefully lay aside any written or printed paper, because they know not but it may have upon it the name of God. But in this, and in every other Christian country, there is reason to fear that multitudes, and probably that most or all those who are habitually profane, use 'this glorious and fearful name' without even a thought that God is present to hear them.

In his own proper character of the glorious and eternal Jehovah, 'who hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and whose kingdom ruleth over all,' it is impossible to regard him with serious, or with even sober thought, and not be filled with profound and reverential awe. It is impossible to realize who, and what, and where HE is, and not be filled with fear and trembling. He called into being the heavens and the earth, 'upholds' them by the word of his power, rules them with an irresistible hand, gives life and death to whomsoever he pleases, is present wherever we are, looks with an intuitive

survey into the secret chambers of the soul, records all our thoughts, words, and actions in the book of his remembrance, and will bring them before our eyes at the final day. On his bounty and forbearance we live. When he gives, we receive; when he withholds, we die. His smile makes heaven; his frown creates hell. Those who fear, and love, and serve him, he will bless; those who rebel against him he will destroy. Who then, unless lost to sense and decency, will not 'tremble at his presence,' and lie low in the dust before him?

But in this deplorable transgression, the profane swearer brings God into his thoughts (if he think at all) and into his conversation, with a character altogether familiar, and with considerations and views of the most debasing vulgarity. The same man, when in the presence of his fellow-men, acknowledged by him to be of respectable characters, would set a guard on his conduct, particularly on his tongue, and would speak of them, and to them, and before them, with sobriety, care, and decorum; and would watchfully give them every reasonable proof, that he regarded them only with respect. From this decency in civilized life, a departure can scarcely be found; unless under the influence of strong passion, or pressing interest.

Surely the Creator of all things has as powerful claims to veneration as the worm which he has made. But notwithstanding his glorious and awful character, notwithstanding we know that he is present to all our conduct, notwithstanding we know that he hears whatever we say, and sees whatever we think or do, we make this great and terrible Being the subject of the most irreverential, impudent thoughts, and of the most vulgar, affrontive, contemptuous language. Nay, all this is done by the profane person for no purpose, but to affront and insult him, and to induce others to affront and insult him also.

All this is done, not once, twice, or in a few solitary instances only; not in the season of forgetfulness, the unguarded hour of passion, or the moment

of peculiar temptation, merely; but every day, in every place, and on every familiar occasion. In this manner God is *habitually* brought up to view, and *continually* insulted. Thus familiarized, thus habituated, to such thoughts and to such language, the profane person soon becomes unable to think or speak concerning his Maker in any other manner. All his thoughts concerning him become a regular course of irreverence; and all his language a tissue of impudence and insult. God, the great and terrible God, 'in whose hand his breath is; in whom he lives, and moves, and has his being;' the God by whom he is soon to be judged, and rewarded with endless life or endless death, becomes speedily to him a mere object of vulgar abuse and gross derision. With what views must this awful Being regard the miserable wretch who thus degrades his character? What must be the appearance of this wretch at the final day?

From God, the source and substance of every thing sacred, the transition to all other sacred things is easy, and, in a sense, instinctive. From him religion derives its existence, its obligation, its power, its hopes, and its rewards. Separated from him, there can be no piety. Separated from him, there can be no morality. Who does not see that without God there could be no Bible, no sabbath, no worship, no holiness, and no heaven. He therefore who is accustomed to profane the name of God, cuts off his connexion with all things serious and sacred. But nothing else is, comparatively, of any use to man. Whatever is gay and amusing, and at the same time innocent, and in some sense useful, is useful only to refresh the mind for a more vigorous application to things of a serious and sacred nature. In these lie all the real and substantial interests of man; the foundations of a virtuous, useful, and happy life, and a glorious immortality. To lose our connexion with them, therefore, is to lose our all. Of course, the profane person voluntarily squanders the blessings of time and eternity; and with a por-

tentous prodigality makes himself 'poor, and wretched, and miserable;' a nuisance to the world, and an outcast from heaven.

3. *Profaneness is in most instances a violation of peculiarly clear and peculiarly solemn inducements to our duty.*

I have already remarked under the preceding head that, in many of the cases specified in the former Discourse, it is impossible that the presence and character of God should not be realized by the profane person. But the character and presence of God united present to every mind not wholly destitute of sobriety a combination of the most solemn and powerful motives to the performance of its duty. The Being by whom we were created, and on whom we depend for life, together with all its blessings and hopes, who 'will bring every work, with every secret thing, into judgment,' and 'who will reward every man according to the deeds done in the body,' with a retribution final and endless, is an object so awful, so interesting, so overwhelming, that one would naturally think no sacrifice too great, no duty too difficult or discouraging, if the performance would secure his favour.

To the considerations which have been here mentioned, others of singular importance are always to be added, when we are examining almost all the cases of profaneness specified in the preceding Discourse. In the *word and institutions* of God, and in all the *religious* services rendered to him according to the dictates of the gospel, he is presented to us as the Father, the Redeemer, and the Sanctifier of mankind, in the most endearing and venerable of all offices; the offices of accomplishing an expiation for sin, renewing the soul, pardoning its transgressions, and entitling it again to the blessings of infinite love. These blessings, literally infinite, flowing only from the sovereign and boundless mercy of Jehovah, are proffered to a mind apostatized, rebellious, and ruined; a mind incapable of renewing itself, and therefore, if left to itself, hopeless of the divine favour, and an outcast from the virtuous, and

happy universe. In such a situation, how deeply should we naturally suppose it must be affected with a sense of the infinite goodness, engaged so wonderfully in its behalf, by the glorious blessings proffered to its acceptance, and by its own infinite need of a share in these blessings. If it will not be influenced by the presence of Jehovah, appearing in these amiable and wonderful characters, if it will not be moved by the proffer of these invaluable and immortal blessings, what inducements can persuade it to perform its duty? If the pleasure of such a God, if the attainment of such a salvation, will not lay hold on the heart, where shall we look for motives of sufficient weight to engage its obedience?

But the profane person does not merely *disobey*, as we commonly understand this term: he disobeys in the *most provoking manner*. He treats his Maker as the Jews treated Christ. They did not merely reject this divine Saviour. They did not merely crucify him. They rejected him with scorn; they crucified him with insult. Thorns they gave him for a crown, and a reed for a sceptre. The respect which they professedly paid him was contempt; and the homage, mockery. Such, for substance, is the manner in which the profane person treats his God. With all the solemn inducements which have been mentioned before his eyes, he not only rejects this glorious Being, and his benevolent offers of eternal life to perishing sinners; but accompanies his rejection with irreverence, despite, and insolence; and cries, 'Who is the Almighty, that I should serve him?' If the 'ways of God' were not 'higher than our ways, as the heavens are higher than the earth,' what would become of this audacious, miserable being?

4 *Profaneness is a sin to which there is scarcely any temptation.*

In the commission of most sins, mankind usually expect and believe they shall obtain some natural good; and this is almost always the prime object of their sinful pursuit: good, forbidden indeed, and

therefore unlawful ; yet still really good in the apprehension of the sinner. Thus persons commonly lie and cheat, for the sake of some gain ; become intoxicated, on account of the pleasure experienced in the use of strong drink ; are gluttons, to enjoy the delightful taste of dainty food ; and thus in almost all other cases of transgression.

But in profaneness there seems to be no good, either enjoyed or expected, beside that which is found in the mere love and indulgence of sin. No person ever acquired property, health, reputation, place, power, nor, it would seem, pleasure, from profaneness. Those particular movements of the tongue which articulate profaneness, produce, so far as I am able to conjecture, no more agreeable sensations than any other. The words, which embody profane thoughts, are neither smoother nor sweeter than any other words. If then profaneness were not sinful, such words would be pronounced no oftener than any other. The pleasure found in profaneness, such as it is, is therefore found chiefly, if not wholly, in the wickedness which it involves and expresses. The *sin* is the good ; and not any thing peculiar to the manner in which it is committed, nor any thing which the profaneness is expected to be the means of acquiring. It may be said, that the profane person recommends himself to his companions, persons with whom he is pleased, and whom he wishes to please ; and that, at the same time, he secures himself from their contempt and ridicule, to which otherwise he would be exposed. This, without doubt, is partially true, and comes nearer than any thing else which can be alleged to a seeming exception to the justice of the remark under consideration. Yet it is hardly a seeming exception. Nothing, but the *wickedness* of this conduct recommends the profane person to his companions, and those to whom he is recommended are sinners only. But for the love of wickedness in *them*, he could not become agreeable to them by this evil practice ; and, but for the love of wickedness in *him*, he could not wish to be thus

agreeable. Can it then be good, can it be gainful? will it be alleged to be gain, to recommend ourselves to sinners by the perpetration of sin? Is not the end which we propose, are not the means which we use, altogether disgraceful both to ourselves and them? Instead of being beneficial to either, are they not the means of corruption and ruin to both? Is the favour of men who love sin, and so ardently love it, as to love us merely for sinning, desirable or useful to us? Is it worth our labour? Does it deserve our wishes? Can it prove a balance for the guilt which we incur? Can it be of any value to us, although in desiring and obtaining it we were to incur no guilt?

But the profane person is *not esteemed*, even by his sinful companions. They may desire him as an associate, and they may relish his wickedness; but they approve of neither. Such persons have repeatedly declared to me, that they approved neither of themselves nor others when guilty of this sin; but regarded it as a stain upon the character of both. The companions of such a man may be pleased with him, and his wickedness, because both may contribute to keep them in countenance, or make them diversion. They may wish to see him as bad, or worse than themselves, that the deep hues of their own guilt may fade at his side. Still they will make him, when he is not present, an object of their contempt and derision. In the same manner men love treason and treachery; and in this manner also despise the traitor. If the profane person will take pains to learn the real opinion of his companions, he will find that they invariably condemn his character on the one hand, and on the other hold it in contempt. In the mean time, he exposes himself uniformly to the abhorrence of virtuous, and even of sober, men. Of this no proof is necessary. The experience of every day informs us, that profane persons are a kind of helots in society; men whom youth are admonished to dread and avoid; men, pointed out to children as warnings against iniquity, branded as nuisances to society.

and marked as blots upon the creation of God.

Virtue is acknowledged to be distinguished and excellent, in some general proportion, at least, to the *disinterestedness* with which it is exercised. Sin, committed without motives of such magnitude as to be properly styled temptations, may be justly termed *disinterested sin*; sin, committed only from the love of sin, and not with a view to any natural good, in which it is to terminate. This must undoubtedly be acknowledged to be wickedness of a dye peculiarly deep, of a nature eminently guilty; and the author of it must, with as little doubt, be eminently vile, odious, and abominable, in the sight of God.

5. *Profaneness is among the most distinguished means of corrupting our fellow-men.*

This observation I intend to apply exclusively to the profaneness of the tongue. It is indeed applicable, with much force, to profaneness, manifested in various kinds of action; but it is peculiarly applicable to the kind of profaneness which I have particularly specified.

Sins of the tongue are all social sins; necessarily social, and eminently social. They are practised only when men are present to hear and to witness, and they are practised wherever men are present to hear. Thus a man is profane before his family; swears, and curses, and ridicules sacred things in the social club, in the street, before his neighbours, and in the midst of a multitude. Persons of all ages become witnesses and learners. Thus children learn to lisp the curse, and the gray-haired sinner to mutter the faltering oath.

No man was ever profane alone, in a wilderness, or in his closet. To the very nature of this sin the presence of others seems so indispensable, that we cannot realize the commission of it by any man, unless in the midst of society. All the mischief of evil example is found in the social nature of man, and in the social nature of those sins to which the whole power of evil example is confined. Where sin is in its nature solitary, and the perpetration, of

course insulated, whatever other guilt it may involve, the sinner plainly cannot be charged with the guilt of corrupting others. In order to follow us in wickedness, others must know that we are wicked. When they hear of our wickedness at a distance, they are always, perhaps, in greater or less danger of being corrupted ; because sympathy is always a powerful propensity of the mind, and because we have always a strong tendency to imitation. But when they are present to see sin in our actions, and to hear it from our tongues, it becomes the means of the most certain and efficacious corruption ; because then the impression is, ordinarily, the strongest possible.

There is, however, one case, in which this corruption, though usually less efficacious in particular instances, is yet much more dreadfully operative, because it is much more extensively diffused. An author, when possessed of sufficient ingenuity, can spread this malignant influence wherever his writings can penetrate ; and expand the force of an evil example over many countries, and through a long succession of ages. Millions of the human race may owe to such a man the commencement and progress of iniquity in their minds, and may imbibe pernicious sentiments, which, but for him, they would have never known, or would have regarded only with abhorrence. In this respect what will not infidels, especially those of distinguished talents, have to answer for at the final day ?

But this evil may be very widely diffused without the aid of the press, or the circulation of volumes. The tongue is an instrument more than sufficiently adapted to this unhappy end. One profane person makes multitudes ; corrupts his professed friends, his daily companions, his near relations, and all with whom he corresponds, so far as they are capable of being corrupted. They again corrupt others ; and they, in their turn, spread the contagion through successive circles of mankind, increasing continually in their numbers and their expansion. Thus a pro-

profane inhabitant of this land may extend the mischiefs of his evil example to other countries, and to future ages; and a profane student of this seminary may and probably will, be the cause of handing down profaneness to students yet unborn.

The mischiefs of evil example are always great; in the present case they are dreadful. The tongue is obviously the prime instrument of human corruption, of diffusing and perpetuating sin, of preventing the eternal life of our fellow-men, of extending perdition over the earth, and of populating the world of misery. 'Behold,' saith St. James, 'how great a matter (in the original, how great a forest) a little fire kindleth!' Small at first to the eye, it catches all the combustible materials within its reach, and, spreading its ravages wider and wider, consumes in the end every thing before it with a universal conflagration. Among all the evil examples which I have heard mentioned, or which have been alluded to within my knowledge, I do not remember, that a dumb man was ever named as one. No person, within my recollection, ever attributed his own sins to the example of such a man. Speaking men are the corruptors of their fellow-men; and they corrupt pre-eminently by their speech. No individual ever began to swear profanely by himself; and few, very few, ever commenced the practice but from imitation. Like certain diseases of the human body, profaneness descends from person to person; and, like the plague, is regularly caught by infection. Let every profane person then solemnly remember how much evil will be charged to him in the great day of account; how many miserable wretches will date their peculiar sinfulness of character, and a vast multitude of their actual transgressions, from the power of his example; how many of his fellow-creatures he will contribute to plunge into eternal perdition; and how dreadfully, as well as justly, all these may wreak their insatiable vengeance on his head, for producing their final ruin; while he will be stripped of every excuse; and be forced by an angry conscience to

say, Amen. Let him remember, that in this respect, if not in many others, he is a pest to human society, and a 'smoke in the nostrils' of his Maker. Finally; let him summon this character and this guilt before his eyes, whenever he repeats his profaneness, with a full conviction that, however he may flatter himself, all around him, as a vast and upright jury, sit daily on the trial of his crimes, and with a unanimous and honest verdict pronounce him guilty.

6. *Profaneness prevents or destroys all reverence towards God, together with all those religious exercises, and their happy consequences, of which it is the source.*

In the Discourse which I formerly delivered on this pre-eminently important religious attribute, I shewed by a numerous train of scriptural passages, that it is peculiarly the means of rendering our worship acceptable to God;—of exciting and keeping alive an abhorrence of sin;—the great source of reformation;—eminently the source of rectitude in our dispositions and conduct towards mankind;—the foundation of peculiar blessings in the present world;—and eminently the means of securing eternal life in the world to come. These blessings, as an aggregate, are infinitely necessary and infinitely valuable to every human being. To prevent them, or to destroy them, that is, to prevent ourselves or others from becoming the subjects of them, is an evil to which no limits can be assigned. But this dreadful work is effectually accomplished by profaneness. Profaneness itself is nothing but a high degree of irreverence to God. But no words are necessary to prove, that reverence and irreverence cannot exist together in the same mind; or that where reverence does not exist, its happy effect cannot be found.

It is plainly impossible that he who indulges in a spirit of profaneness should ever worship God in an acceptable manner. This spirit, once indulged, soon becomes habitual; and will be present and predominate at all times and on all occasions.

will accompany him to the house of God ; and, if we could suppose such a man to attend private or secret devotion, would mingle itself with his family prayers, and, entering with him into his closet, would there insult his Maker to his face. But the truth is, he will neither pray in his family nor in his closet. These exercises of piety he will only ridicule ; and regard those who scrupulously perform them as the pitiful slaves of fear, voluntarily shackled by the chains of superstition. To the sanctuary he may, at times, go, from curiosity, a regard to reputation, and a remaining sense of decency. There, however, all his seeming devotion will be merely external ; an offering ‘ of the blind and the lame ; a sacrifice of swine’s flesh ; an abomination, which God cannot away with ;’ a dead form, a corpse without a soul, without life, corrupted, putrid, sending forth ‘ a savour of death unto death.’

Instead of exciting and keeping alive an abhorrence of sin in his mind, the profane person, by the very irreverence which he cherishes, excites and keeps alive all his other tendencies to iniquity. God, the only object of obedience, imperfectly obeyed by the best mind which ever inhabited this sinful world, soon becomes to him, by this very disposition, familiar, insignificant, and despised. Who could obey a Being regarded in this manner ? What anxiety can be occasioned by the thought of disobeying him ? Who can be solicitous concerning the evil of sin, when such is in his view the object against which sin is to be committed ? Which of us could be at all apprehensive of either the guilt or the danger of sinning against a Being whom we regarded only with contempt ?

The reformation of a profane person is out of the question. His progress is only downward. Profaneness is the mere floodgate of iniquity ; and the stream, once let out, flows with a current, daily becoming more and more rapid and powerful. There is no crime to which profaneness does not lend efficacious and malignant aid. It is the very nurse of

sin the foster-parent of rebellion, ingratitude, and impiety.

The unjust judge, who feared not God, regarded not man. Such will be the conduct, whenever temptation invites, of all who do not fear God. Persons of this description may, I acknowledge, have originally the same natural affections with other men. But even these, so far as they are of any real use to others, will, if I have observed the conduct of mankind with success, be gradually worn away by the spirit of irreverence, and, while they last, will fail of producing their most proper and valuable effects. A profane person cannot long pray with his family. He cannot teach his children their duty. He cannot reprove them for sin. He cannot set them an example of piety. He cannot exhort them to seek salvation. He cannot take them by the hand, and lead them to heaven.

What blessings can he expect from the hand of God in the present world? He may, indeed, be rich. 'Oft,' says the poet,

'Oft on the vilest, riches are bestow'd,
To shew their meanness in the sight of God.'

Should he be rich, his wealth will be a curse, and not a blessing; the means merely of increasing his pride, of hardening his heart, and of inclining him to 'treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God.' He may, on account of his talents, his heroism, or some other cause, be held in estimation among his fellow-men. But whatever reputation he may acquire in this manner, this, like his wealth, will prove only a curse to him; for, although 'highly esteemed among men,' he will be 'an abomination in the sight of God.'

Beyond the grave he can expect and can receive nothing but 'indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish.' His profaneness is an unceasing and fearful provocation of his Maker, and a terrible preparation for a future life of eternal blasphemy. All the

min of futurity, and all the guilt and wretchedness of this life, he voluntarily brings upon himself by the indulgence of this odious, senseless, causeless sin; and thus quietly and coolly prepares himself to be destroyed for ever. In 'sinning against God,' in this manner, he eminently 'wrongs his own soul; and loves, invites, and solicits everlasting death.

SERMON CIV.

THE LAW OF GOD. THE DECALOGUE.

THE THIRD COMMANDMENT.

THE DANGER OF PROFANENESS.

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless, that taketh his name in vain.—EXOD. XX. 7.

IN the two preceding Discourses I considered at length the nature and the guilt of Profaneness. I shall now proceed, according to the plan originally proposed, to examine with some attention the danger of this sin.

All sin is dangerous. But there are different kinds and degrees of danger in different sins. On those which especially attend this sin, or which, though common to other sinful habits, are connected with profaneness in a remarkable manner, I mean to insist in the following Discourse.

1. *Profaneness is eminently the source of corruption to the whole character.*

That there is an intimate connexion between the thoughts and the tongue, is perfectly well known to all men of consideration. The nature of this connexion is, however, misapprehended, if I mistake not, by most men. All persons perceive, that their thoughts give birth to their words; while few seem to be aware, that their words, to a vast extent, originate and modify their thoughts. Almost all mora-

attributes and employments operate mutually as causes and effects. Thus irreverence of thought generates profaneness of expression ; and profaneness of expression, in its turn, generates and ennobles irreverence of thought. Thus, universally, the mind moves the tongue ; and the tongue again, in its turn, moves the mind. The person who speaks evil will always think evil. By this I do not mean, that *evil thoughts* must precede *evil speaking* ; and that the man must, therefore, have been the subject of evil thoughts, in order to have spoken evil. I mean, that evil speaking, although an effect of evil thoughts, is, in its turn, a cause of new and other evil thoughts. He who thinks ill, will undoubtedly speak and act ill. This all men readily acknowledge. It is equally certain, although not equally well understood, that evil speech and evil actions directly corrupt the mind, and render it more sinful than it would ever become, if it were not to speak and act in this manner.

A familiar example or two will advantageously illustrate this subject. An angry man becomes at once more violent and wrathful, when he begins to vent his passion by words. What before was anger, soon becomes fury. Before, he was able to retain his spirit within some bounds of decency ; but as soon as his tongue is let loose, his countenance will be distorted, his eyes flash, and his sentiments be the mere effusions of frenzy. A revengeful man kindles like a furnace from the moment in which he begins to execute his revenge. What before was the revenge of a human heart, is speedily changed into the fell malignity of a fiend.

St. James has exhibited this tendency of the tongue to corrupt the mind, in language remarkable for exact, and forcible. He styles it 'an unruly member ; a fire ; a world of iniquity ;' and declares, that 'it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature.' Its influence on the mind itself, as well as on the affairs of mankind, he describes in this strong exclamation : 'Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth !' That the eye of St. James

was directed to the *profaneness* of the tongue is obvious from what he says in the two succeeding verses. 'Therewith bless we God, and therewith curse we men. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing.' Cursing, one dreadful kind of profaneness, was, according to his own account, in the eye of the apostle a kind of profaneness, mingled always with every other, and inseparable from every other. In this very sense, then, 'the tongue is full of deadly poison; a fire that kindles the whole course of nature' in the soul; and 'defiles the whole body' and the whole mind.

Of the correctness of those apostolic declarations, experience furnishes ample proof. Among all the multitude of persons who have borne the character of profaneness, not one was ever believed, on account of his other conduct, by any competent judge acquainted with him, to be a virtuous man. Many persons have begun to be profane from mere inconsideration; and, at the commencement of their career, were no more depraved than such of their companions as abstained from this sin. In their progress, however, they became corrupted much more extensively within the same period, increased generally in wickedness, and particularly in hardness of heart, and lost every serious and even sober thought: all that course of thought whence moral good might be derived, or whence might spring any hopeful efforts towards salvation. This is a case which must, I think, have frequently met the eye of every man who is seriously attentive to the moral conduct of his fellow-men, and strongly shews that the practice has itself deplorably corrupted them in other respects, and sets on fire the whole course of nature in their minds and lives. Hence, instead of being accounted virtuous on account of any thing in their other conduct, persons addicted to this sin have been regarded by common sense as gross sinners of course. 'A profane person' is therefore, as you well know, proverbial language, used regularly to denote a wicked, vicious wretch.

The truth plainly is, and all men discern it to be truth, that irreverence to God is a general source of wickedness. As I remarked in a former Discourse, *religious reverence is the direct and peculiar source of reformation.* Irreverence, its opposite, is in the same manner the direct source of degeneracy. This is indeed true of most sins, when *habitually and allowedly* practised. He who practises one sin in this manner, will almost necessarily relish other sins more. As the body, when corrupted and weakened by sickness, is more prepared for the admission of any disease that may arrest it; so the soul, corrupted by sin of any kind, becomes more fitted for the admission of every kind of wickedness which seeks admission. The conscience becomes less tender, less awake, less alarmed at the apprehension of guilt. The motives, also, which should induce us to abstain from iniquity, gradually lose their power. The love of sinning, the evil passions and appetites, gain strength by indulgence; and temptation, having repeatedly vanquished us, more easily vanquishes us again.

But irreverence, more than almost any other evil, brings us into this danger. Whenever God becomes an object of little importance or estimation in our view, the *evil* of sinning vanquishes of course. The *danger* also speedily recedes from our view. The only great and solemn object in the universe, the only being who is of ultimate importance to us, loses all his awfulness and sanctity. The great and commanding motive is therefore gone; and there is nothing left to restrain us, but reputation or convenience. In this situation the mind is prepared for future perpetration, not only by an increased love to sinning, but by a strong and habitual *feeling*, operating with much more power than mere *conviction*, that sin is neither guilty nor dangerous; or, at the worst, as a thing of small moment. The soul is thus left free to the indulgence of its evil propensities; and the restraints, which once operated with no small efficacy, lose their hold on the mind.

An affecting exemplification of this doctrine is seen in the tendency of one exercise of profaneness to produce another. Persons addicted to profane swearing, are, I apprehend, much more prone than most others to the commission of perjury. An oath is an eminently solemn act of religious worship. The person who takes an oath, calls God to witness the manner in which he shall speak or act under the obligation which it imposes. If he shall speak truth, and nothing else; if he shall act faithfully in the office or trust which he is then assuming; he implores God to bless him here and hereafter. If he shall speak falsely, or act unfaithfully, he in the same solemn manner invokes on his head the divine vengeance through time and eternity.

Now it is plain beyond a doubt, that the solemn and awful character of God constitutes all the solemnity of an oath. If he is considered by the person who takes it as holy and sin-hating, as the unchangeable enemy of faithlessness and falsehood; if he is realized as a present and awful witness both of the oath and the subsequent conduct; if he is believed to be the future and dreadful avenger of perjury and unfaithfulness; then we cannot but suppose, that the person who has thus sworn, will deeply feel his obligation to be sincere and faithful; will with deep anxiety speak the truth exactly, or discharge the duties of the assumed office in the fear of God.

But if, on the contrary, the juror, whether in evidence or in office, regards God as an object of little importance; as being either too weak, or too regardless of rectitude, to take any serious concern in the moral conduct of his creatures; as destitute of sacredness of character, and hatred of sin; as indifferent to truth and falsehood, faithfulness and treachery; as willing to be mocked with impunity, and abused without resentment; as existing, only to be a mere caterer to the wants and wishes of his creatures, and a mere object of profanation and contempt: then, plainly, the oath, in which he is in-

voked, can have little solemnity in the eyes, little influence on the heart, and little efficacy upon the conduct of the juror. To every such person it will become a thing of course; a mere wind-and-weather incident, an empty mockery of solemn sounds on a thoughtless tongue. Its obligation he will neither feel nor see. The duties which it requires he will not perform. There will therefore be no difference of conduct in this case, 'between him that swear-eth, and him that sweareth not.'

But how evident is it, that persons who swear profanely, speedily lose all sense of the awful character of the Creator. From trifling with him in this wonderful manner, they soon learn to consider him as a mere trifier. From insulting him daily, they soon regard him as a proper object of insult. From mocking him with such impious effrontery, they speedily think of him in scarcely any other character than that of a mere butt of mockery. Thus God is first degraded in the view of the mind by its own profaneness, and then intruded upon by perjury. He who swears profanely, will, in ordinary cases, soon swear falsely. Accordingly, custom-house oaths, proverbially false, are usually taken by profane men. Nay, such men have by their own perjuries rendered these oaths proverbially false. Oaths in evidence, also, taken by such men, are justly regarded as lying under a general imputation; as contributing not a little to unhinge the confidence of mankind in this their last reliance for truth and safety.

What is true of *profane cursing and swearing*, as to its corrupting power, is true of *irreverence in every form*. Disregard to God is the floodgate to all moral evil. He who enters upon this conduct, ought to consider himself as then entering upon a universal course of iniquity, and as then yielding himself as a slave, to do the whole arudgery of Satan.

2. *Profaneness is a sin which is rapidly progressive.*

This truth cannot but be discerned extensively in the observations already made. Every act of profaning the name, perfections, works, word, and wor-

ship of God, is obviously a bold, presumptuous attack upon this glorious Being. The sinner, having once dared so far, becomes easily more daring; and passes rapidly from one state of wickedness to another, until he becomes finally hardened in rebellion against his Maker. That most necessary fear of God, which is the great restraint upon sinful men, is speedily lost. The sinner is then left without a check upon his wickedness; and voluntarily induces upon himself a flinty obstinacy, which is a kind of reprobation on this side of the grave.

At the same time, the tongue is a most convenient instrument of iniquity, always ready for easy use. We cannot always sin with the hands, and are not always sufficiently gratified by mere sins of thought. Much as it is to be lamented, there is no small source of pleasure found by wicked men in communicating their sinful thoughts and feelings to each other. The slanderer is never satisfied with merely thinking over slander. The liar would soon be discouraged, if he could not utter his lies. The profane swearer could hardly fail of becoming a reformed man, were it not for the pleasure, little as it is, which he finds in uttering his profaneness to others. The sins of the tongue are perpetrated alike with ease and delight every day, and in every place, where even a solitary individual can be found to listen. Hence transgressions of this kind are multiplied wonderfully. The thief steals, and the cheat defrauds occasionally only. But the slanderer will slander every day. The liar utters falsehood unceasingly. The profane person swears and curses every where, and multiplies his iniquities 'as the drops of the morning.' From the mind of such a person it is reasonably believed, that the Spirit of God, 'who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity,' will in a peculiar manner withdraw his influence. Can it be rationally supposed, that this celestial visitant will stay with man, to be a witness of irreverence and profanation? Ought not every profane person to feel that he is forcing away from himself those benevolent restraints upon his

wickedness which constitute his only security, and the only rational foundation of his hopes of eternal life?

3. *Profuneness, particularly that of the tongue, naturally introduces men to evil companions, and shuts them out from the enjoyment of those who are virtuous.*

All men love, all men seek, companions of their own character. Sinners herd with sinners instinctively. Virtuous men seek the company of those who are virtuous. Men of learning consort with men of learning; philosophers with philosophers; merchants, farmers, mechanics, and seamen, seek the company of those of their own class; the mere incidental circumstances of pursuing the same kind of business alluring them regularly to the society of each other. Still more powerful are moral inducements. This is a fact so extensively observed, that mankind have proverbially remarked, that, 'A man is known by the company which he keeps.'

Profane persons are shut out from the company of virtuous men by a variety of considerations. They totally disrelish the character of virtuous men; their pursuits, their sentiments, their conversation, and usually shun their society on this account. They also dread their inspection, and fear to have them witnesses of their own character, language, and opinions. For this reason, whenever they are in their company, they feel obliged to guard themselves, to bridle their tongues, and to take care that their language and sentiments be not offensive to their companions, and dishonourable to themselves. This restraint like all others, is painful; and they are unwilling to subject themselves to it, whenever it can be avoided.

Virtue also is in its own nature awful to all sinners; and proud as they are of themselves and their sins, they cannot fail, in the hour of sober consideration, to feel their inferiority; and accordingly to be humbled, mortified, and abashed. Christ informs us, that 'he who doeth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be

reproved.' For the very same reason profane persons, and other sinners, hate the company of religious men; because their character and conduct are a direct contrast to their own, and hold them out in a strong light of unworthiness and debasement. This contrast few wicked men are willing to bear. Almost all of them shrink from it, as a wounded patient shrinks from the probe of the surgeon.

At the same time, virtuous persons loathe of course the company and conversation of all open and obstinate sinners. But profane persons are among the most open of all sinners. Their sin is ever on their lips, and continually proclaimed by their tongues. It is impossible, therefore, that their characters should not be known. Persons so directly opposed in feelings and pursuits, can never unite with that mutual agreement of heart or conversation, which is indispensable to the pleasantness, and even to the continuance, of familiar society. The virtuous man will at the same time find every thing lacking in such persons which he seeks for in company, whether it be pleasure or profit.

In addition to these things, his reputation becomes stained, and very deeply, if he consorts voluntarily with such companions. 'Why,' it will naturally be asked, 'does he frequent such company?'—'Certainly,' it will be answered, 'not for profit.' The necessary inference is therefore that he frequents it for the sake of pleasure. Of course, he must find pleasure in sin, and in this peculiarly odious sin. But to find pleasure in any sin is a direct contradiction of his religious profession, a direct denial of his Christian character. In this manner then he wounds himself, he wounds the church, he wounds the cause of God. What Christian can be supposed to make such a sacrifice, for the sake of any thing which he can gain from sinful companions?

But the dangers from evil companions are continual, extreme, and in a sense infinite. They are found every moment, and in every place; especially in the haunts customarily frequented by men of this

character. Here all the means of sinning are gathered together. 'The companion of fools,' or wicked men, saith God, 'shall be destroyed.'

The advantages of virtuous company, on the contrary, are great and unspeakable. Their sentiments and conduct are such, as their consciences approve, and such as God approves. Their sentiments are all conformed to the Scriptures. Their conduct is the natural fruit of their sentiments; not perfect indeed, but sincere, amiable, and excellent. In this character is presented a powerful check upon sin, and a powerful support to virtue. No persons can give so alarming an exhibition of the evil, guilt, and danger of sin as they. No persons can place virtue in so alluring a light. They have felt the evils of sin, the foretastes of immortality, and the pleasures of holiness. They therefore can enter with the heart into both subjects, and can speak of both with feelings unknown to other men, and incapable of being known until they become virtuous. Hence good may be gained, and evil avoided, by means of their company, by means peculiar to them, which is often unattainable or unavoidable in any other manner.

By shutting himself out from this company, the profane person therefore voluntarily relinquishes one of the chief blessings of life, one of the great means of securing life eternal. Nothing perhaps, beside the worship of God, and a religious education, contributes more frequently, or more certainly, to bring men into the strait and narrow way, to keep them in it after they have once entered, or to aid and quicken them in the journey towards heaven. Nothing, on the other hand, seems more readily or regularly to withdraw them from danger, guilt, and ruin. All this good the profane person voluntarily casts away. Other sinners, of more decent characters, often enjoy this blessing; and find it a blessing indeed. But the profane person carries with him the label of rejection; the mark of outlawry from virtuous society; a label voluntarily worn; a mark branded by himself.

At the same time he is consigned in the same vo-

untary manner to the company of wicked men. Here virtue and hope are blasted together. Here all the curses, opposed to the blessings above-recited multiply and thrive. Here his life is wasted, and his soul hazarded, assassinated, and destroyed for ever.

4. *Profaneness exposes men to the terrible denunciation of the text.*

The occasion on which this threatening was pronounced, the Person by whom, and the manner and circumstances in which, it was published to mankind, ought to render it peculiarly alarming to every man who is guilty of this sin. 'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain,' said the Creator of all things, with an audible voice from Sinai, while the world was trembling beneath him; 'for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.' This was the declaration of him who is thus profaned, and thus mocked; of him who is an ear-witness of all this profaneness and mockery of him, by whom the wretch guilty of this fearful transgression will be judged and condemned at the final day. The threatening is denounced against a single transgression of this nature. What then must be the guilt and the danger of profane persons, deformed as they usually are with transgressions scarcely numerable by man? What a chain of profanation, of oaths and curses, will every such person drag after him to the throne of God! How will he tremble at the retrospect, shrink from the dread tribunal, before his cause is heard; and realize the sentence of condemnation before it is pronounced!

The threatening here declared is a sentence gone forth beforehand from the tribunal of eternal justice, against this particular transgression; a doom already pronounced, and hastening to its execution, by the hand of him from whom no sinner can escape. It is a sentence which cannot be misunderstood, against a crime which cannot be doubted. Many sins are of such a nature that the sinner may question the

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reality of his guilt. Here the crime is perfectly known, and the sentence absolutely decisive. The profane person therefore may consider himself as tried, judged, and condemned already; judged and condemned from amidst the thunders and lightnings of the mount of God; and woe be to him, who does not 'believe and tremble.'

REMARKS.

1. *These observations exhibit in a strong light the depravity of the human heart.*

In the progress of these Discourses it has been clearly evinced, that profaneness is a sin perpetrated in an almost endless variety of forms; that it is a sin attended with enormous guilt, and exposing the perpetrator to immense danger. It has also been shewn, that the inducements to it are very few, and very small; while the motives opposed to it are very many, and very great. Yet how evident is it that this very sin is, and ever has been, practised by incomprehensible multitudes of mankind! The Jews were profane; the Mohammedans are profane; the Christian nations are profane; and the heathen nations are, and ever were, profane to such gods as they acknowledged. Among all these nations, or, in other words, throughout the whole reign of time, innumerable individuals have ever been profane. Indeed, in one form or another, no man has been guiltless of that irreverence towards God in which the essence of profaneness consists. The evil therefore spreads over the world, and, in one form or another, attaches itself to every child of Adam.

How wonderful a specimen of human corruption is presented in the so general profanation of the name of God, exhibited in light-minded cursing and swearing! How perfectly at a loss is reason for a motive to originate and explain this conduct! Why should the name of the Creator be treated with irreverence? Why should not any thing else be uttered by man, if we consider him merely as a rational being, without recurring at all to his moral and accountable

character, rather than language of this nature? Certainly, it contributes not in the least degree to the advancement of any purpose cherished by the mind of the profane person, unless that purpose is mere profaneness. I know well, that *passion* is often pleaded for the use of this language. But why should passion prompt to profaneness? Anger, one would suppose, would naturally vent itself in expressions of resentment against the person who had provoked us. But this person is always a fellow-creature, a man like ourselves. In what way, or in what degree, is God concerned in this matter? What has the passion, what has the provocation, to do with him, his name, or his character? Why do we affront and injure him, because a creature, infinitely unlike him, has affronted and injured us? I know, that *custom* also is pleaded, as an extenuation, and perhaps as an explanation, of this crime. But how came such a custom to exist? How came any rational being ever to think of profaning the name of God? How came any other rational being to follow him in this wickedness? Whence was it, that so many millions of those who ought to be rational beings have followed them both? What end can it have answered? What honour, gain, or pleasure can it have furnished? What taste can it have gratified? What desire, what affection, can it have indulged? What end can the profane person have proposed to himself?

Can any explanation be given of this conduct, except that it springs from love to wickedness itself? From a heart fixedly opposed to its Maker, pleased with affronting him, loving to abuse his character, and to malign his glorious agency? A heart in which sin is gratuitous; by which, in juster language, nothing is gained, much is plainly lost, and every thing is hazarded? What, beside the love of sinning, what, but the peculiar turpitude of the character, can be the source or the explanation of this conduct?

2 These observations teach us the goodness of God in

alarming mankind concerning this sin in so solemn manner.

The guilt of profaneness cannot be questioned nor can there be any more question concerning the danger to which the perpetrator exposes himself, in such a situation, how kindly has the lawgiver of the universe warned mankind against the perpetration, by announcing to them, in this affecting manner the evil to which it would expose them. He saw perfectly their tendency to this wickedness; and, with infinite mercy, has been pleased to provide those means for their safety which are best calculated to ensure it.

If a child were advancing towards the brow of a precipice, how kindly would he and his parent regard a friend, who should announce to him his danger, direct him with sure guidance, and influence him with efficacious motives, to avoid it. The threatening contained in this command, and, together with it, all those which are found in the Scriptures, are calculated for this very purpose. They warn us of approaching guilt; they declare to us approaching danger. Thousands and millions of the human race have been actually saved by them from impending destruction. Terrible are they, indeed, to obstinate sinners, because they disturb them in their beloved course of sinning, and because they intend not to cease from sin. Still they are not the less mercifully given. They are the very means by which immense multitudes have been 'plucked as brands out of the burning.'

3. Let me warn all those who hear me to shun profaneness.

To this end, fix in your minds a solemn and controlling sense of the evil and danger of this sin. Make this sense habitual in such a manner, that it may be always ready to rise up in the mind, and present itself before your eyes. Feel that you will gain nothing here, and lose every thing hereafter.

Under the influence of these views, keep the evil always at a great distance. Mark the men who are

profane; and avoid their company as you would avoid the plague. Shun the places where profaneness abounds, or where it may be expected to abound, as you would shun a quicksand. 'Avoid them, pass not by them, turn from them, pass away.' Remember that these places 'are the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.'

Unceasingly say to yourselves, 'Thou God seest me.' Unceasingly say to yourselves, 'The Lord will not hold him guiltless, that taketh his name in vain.' Remember, that he is most mercifully disposed to be your Father, and everlasting friend; that he cannot be your friend, unless you regard him 'with reverence and godly fear;' and that, if he be not your friend, you will throughout eternity be friendless, and helpless, and hopeless. What then will become of you?

Carefully avoid mentioning his great name on any except solemn occasions; and in any manner which is not strictly reverential. Never speak, never think, of God, his Son, his Spirit, his name, his works, his word, or his institutions, without solemnity and awe. Never approach his house, or his word, without reverence. Prepare yourselves by solemn consideration and humble prayer for his worship. Shun all that language which, though not directly profane, is merely a series of steps towards profaneness; and all those thoughts of sacred things which are tinged with levity. At the same time, daily beseech him to preserve you, and let your unceasing prayer be, 'Set a watch, O Lord! before my mouth: keep the door of my lips.'

4. *Let me solemnly admonish the profane persons in this assembly of their guilt and danger.*

You, unhappily for yourselves, are those who 'take the name of God in vain;' and of course are now, or soon will be, subjects of all the guilt and danger which I have specified. 'Now, therefore, thus saith the Lord, Consider your ways.' Remember what you are doing; against whom your evil tongues are directed; who is the object of your contempt and mockery.

Ask yourselves what you gain—what you expect to gain—what you do not lose. Remember, that you lose your reputation, at least in the minds of all the wise and good, and all the blessings of their company and friendship; that you sacrifice your peace of mind; that you break down all those principles on which virtue may be grafted, and with them every rational hope of eternal life; that you **are** rapidly becoming more and more corrupted, day by day; and that, with this deplorable character, you are preparing to go to the judgment. Think what it will be to swear and curse, to mock God and insult your Redeemer through life; to carry your oaths and curses to a dying bed; to enter eternity with blasphemies in your mouths; and to stand before the final bar, when the last sound of profaneness has scarcely died upon your tongues.

If these considerations do not move you, if they do not make you tremble at the thought of what you are doing, if they do not force you to a solemn pause in the career of iniquity, if they do not compel you to retrace your downward steps, and return, while it is in your power, to reformation and safety, I can only say, that you are hurried by an evil spirit to destruction; that you are maniacs in sin, on whom neither reason nor religion has any influence; **and that you will soon find yourselves in the eternal dungeon of darkness and despair.**

SERMON CV.

THE LAW OF GOD. THE DECALOGUE.

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT.

THE PERPETUITY OF THE SABBATH.

Remember the sabbath-day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath-day, and hallowed it.—EXOD. xx. 8—11.

THE command which is given us in this passage of Scripture requires no explanation. I shall, therefore, proceed immediately to the consideration of the great subject which it presents to our view, under the following heads:—

I. *The perpetual establishment of the sabbath.*

II. *The manner in which it is to be observed.*

I. *I shall endeavour to prove the perpetual establishment of the sabbath in the Scriptures.*

This subject I propose to consider at length; and in the course of my examination, shall attempt to offer direct proof of its perpetuity, and then to answer objections.

In direct proof of the perpetuity of this institution, I allege,

1. *The text*

The text is one of the commands of the moral law. Now it is acknowledged, that the moral law is, in the most universal sense, binding on men of every age and every country. If, then, this command be a part of that law, all mankind must be under immoveable obligations to obey the injunctions which it contains.

That it is a part of the moral law, I argue from the fact, that it is *united* with the *other commands*, which are acknowledged to be of this nature. It is twice placed in the midst of the decalogue: in the context, and in the fifth of Deuteronomy. This fact, you will remember, was the result of design, and not of accident; a design formed and executed by God himself, and not by Moses.

I argue it also from the fact, that *this command*, together with the remaining nine, *was spoken with an awful and audible voice, from the midst of the thunders and lightnings which enveloped Mount Sinai*. The splendour and majesty of this scene were such, that 'all the people who were in the camp trembled. And when they saw the thunderings, and lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking, they removed, and stood afar off; and said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.' Even Moses himself 'exceedingly feared and quaked.'

I argue this doctrine also from the fact, that *this command was written by the finger of God, on one of the two tables of stone, originally prepared by himself, and destined to contain nothing but this and the other precepts of the decalogue*. It was afterward written again by the same hand, after these tables were broken, on one of two similar tables, prepared by Moses. A table of stone, and a pillar of stone, were in ancient times direct symbols of the perpetuity of whatever was engraved on them. This very natural symbol God was pleased to adopt in the present case, to shew the perpetual obligation of these commands. The remainder of the law given by Moses was all written in a book; and was here intentionally and entirely distinguished, as to its importance, from the decalogue. The tables of stone on which these commands were written were *fashioned by the hand of God himself*. This, also, forms a peculiar article of distinction between the decalogue and the rest of the Jewish law. Nothing but the decalogue ever received such an honour as

this. It was written on one of these tables *by the finger of God*. This, also, is a distinction peculiar to the decalogue.

When Moses, in his zeal to destroy the idolatry of the Israelites, had broken the two tables of stone, fashioned and written upon in this manner, God directed him to make two other tables of stone, like the first. On these he was pleased to write the same commands *a second time*. In this act he has taught us, that he was pleased to become a second time the recorder of these precepts with his own hand, rather than that the entire distinction between these precepts, and others, should be obliterated.

Every part of this solemn transaction, it is to be remembered, was the result of *contrivance* and *design*; of contrivance and design on the part of *God himself*. Every part of it, therefore, speaks a language which is to be examined and interpreted by us. Now let me ask, whether this language is not perfectly intelligible, and perfectly unambiguous? Is it not clear, beyond every rational debate, that God designed to distinguish these precepts from every other part of the Mosaic law, both as to their superior importance, and their perpetuity? Is it not incredible, that God should mark, in so solemn a manner, this command, together with the remaining nine, unless he intended that all to whom these precepts should come, that is, all Jews and Christians, or all who should afterward read the Scriptures, should regard these commands as possessing that very importance which he thus significantly gave them; should consider them as being, in a peculiar sense, his law; and hold them as being perpetually and universally obligatory?

It is farther to be remembered, that *this command is delivered in the same absolute manner as the other nine*. There is no limitation to the phraseology in which it is contained, 'Honour thy father and thy mother,' is obligatory on all children to whom this precept shall come. 'Thou shalt not steal,' is a precept, prohibiting the stealing of every man who shall

know it. Every Gentile, as well as every Jew, 'who sinneth, under the law, will' (according to the spirit of the apostle's declaration) 'be judged by the law.' Agreeably to this equitable construction, every person to whom this precept shall come, is bound to remember the sabbath-day, to keep it holy.'

But it is acknowledged, that 'all the remaining commands are indeed universally obligatory, being in their own nature moral, and having, therefore, a universal application to mankind. This, however, is plainly a command merely positive, and, therefore, destitute of this universality of application. It may, of course, be dispensed with; may be supposed to have been delivered to the Jews only, like their ceremonial and judicial law; may have been destined to continue so long as their national state continued; and thus may have been designed to be of neither universal nor perpetual obligation.'

To this objection, which I have stated at full length, that I might be sure of doing justice to it, I give the following answer:—

(1.) It appears to me evident, that, so far as my information extends, the distinction between moral and positive commands has been less clearly made by moral writers than most other distinctions. It will be impossible for any man clearly to see, and to limit exactly what they intend when they use these terms. To remove this difficulty, so far as my audience are concerned, and to enable them to know what I design while I am using these words, I will attempt to define them with some particularity.

A *moral* precept is one which regulates the moral conduct of intelligent creatures, and binds the will and the conscience. It is either limited, or universal; it is universal, or, in other words, is obligatory on the consciences of intelligent creatures at all times, and in all circumstances, when their situations and relations are universally such as to render the conduct required in these precepts their duty invariably, and in the nature of things. Of this kind, the number of precepts is certainly very small. We

are bound to love God, and our neighbour, invariably. But the fifth command, in its obvious sense, can have no application where the relations of parent and child do not exist; the sixth, where rational beings are immortal; the seventh, where the distinction of sex is not found. To these precepts, therefore, the criterion of universality, generally regarded as the principal mark of the moral nature of precepts, is plainly inapplicable; and it is altogether probable, that these precepts will have no existence in any world but this. Limited moral precepts are those which require the duties arising from such relations and circumstances as exist only for limited periods, or among certain classes or divisions of rational beings. Thus various moral precepts, found in the judicial law of Moses, obligated to obedience none but the people of that nation, and strangers dwelling among them. Thus, also, he who has no parents, is not required to perform the duties enjoined upon a child; he who has no wife, those required of a husband; and he who has no children, those demanded of a father.

Positive precepts are such as require conduct of moral beings which, antecedently to the promulgation of them, was not their duty; and, independently of them, would never have become their duty; but would have remained for ever a matter of indifference. It ought to be observed here, that some precepts are considered as merely positive, because the duties enjoined by them were unknown, and would have continued unknown, to those of whom they are required, independently of the publication of the precepts. These precepts, however, are no less of a moral nature, than if the duties, which they enjoin, and the relations from which those duties spring, had always been perfectly known. A precept of a merely positive nature creates a duty which, but for the precept, would not exist; which does not depend for its existence on the nature of the relations sustained by the subject as a rational being; but is intended to promote some useful, incidental purpose.

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and is not due, nor demanded, from the subject in other cases, although sustaining exactly the same relations. Thus the precept requiring the building of booths at the passover, may be considered as a positive precept. Thus, also, many others, enjoining particular parts of the Jewish ritual.

(2.) The precept contained in the text is, according to these definitions, a moral, and not a positive precept. The sabbath was instituted for the following ends:—

It was intended to give the laborious classes of mankind an opportunity of *resting from toil*.

It was intended to be a *commemoration* of the wisdom, power, and goodness, of God in the creation of the universe.

It was intended to furnish an opportunity of *increasing holiness in man*, while in a state of *innocence*.

It was intended to furnish an opportunity to *fallen man* of *acquiring holiness*, and of *obtaining salvation*.

In *every one* of these respects the sabbath is *equally useful, important, and necessary, to every child of Adam*. It was no more necessary to a Jew to rest after the labour of six days was ended, than to any other man. It was no more necessary to a Jew to commemorate the perfections of God displayed in the work of creation; it was no more necessary to a Jew to gain holiness, or to increase it; it is no more necessary to a Jew to seek, or to obtain, salvation. Whatever makes either of these things interesting to a Jew, in any degree, makes them, in the same degree, interesting to every other man. The nature of the command, therefore, teaches, as plainly as the nature of a command can teach, that it is of *universal application* to mankind. It has then this great criterion of a moral precept; *viz. universality of application*.

That it is the duty of all men to commemorate the perfections of God displayed in the work of creation, cannot be questioned. Every living man is bound to contemplate, understand, and adore these

perfections. But we cannot know them in the abstract, or as they exist merely in him. We learn them only as displayed in his works, and in his word. We are bound, therefore, to learn them as thus displayed, and that in proportion to the clearness and glory of the display. The clearness and glory with which these perfections are manifested in the work of creation, are transcendently great, and demand, from all creatures, a contemplation proportionally attentive, and an adoration proportionally exalted. To commemorate this glorious work, therefore, is a plain and important duty of all men; this being the peculiar service demanded of them by his character, and his relation to them as their Creator. But this commemoration was the original and supreme object of the command. It cannot be denied that this is a moral service, nor that the precept requiring it is a moral precept.

To perform this service in the *best manner* is also as much a moral duty, as to perform it at all. If any duty be not performed in the best manner, it is only performed in part; the remainder being, of course, omitted: but no words can be necessary to prove, that we are equally obliged to perform one part of a duty as another.

If we know not, and cannot know, the best manner, we are invariably bound to choose the best which we do know. If, however, the best manner be made known to us, we are invariably obliged to adopt it to the exclusion of all others.

The best manner in the present case is made known to us in this command. We are assured that it is the best manner, by the fact, that God has chosen it. No man can doubt whether God's manner is the best nor whether it is his own duty to adopt it rather than any other. This manner is a commemoration of the perfections of God, thus disclosed, on one day in seven.

That a *particular day*, or set time, should be devoted to this important purpose, is indispensable. The duty is a social one, in which the rational crea-

tures of God in this world are universally to unite. But, unless a particular day were set apart for this duty, the union intended would be impossible.

It is of the last importance, that the *day* should be *appointed by God*. Men would not agree on any particular day. If they should agree, it would always be doubtful whether the time chosen by them was the best ; and the day appointed by men would have neither authority, sacredness, nor sanction. In a matter merely of human institution, all who pleased would dissent, and in such a world as ours, most or all would choose to dissent. The whole duty, therefore, would be left undone, and the glorious perfections of God, unfolded in the work of creation, would be wholly forgotten. This precept is also entirely of a moral nature, as to the whole end at which it aims, so far as man is concerned. This end is, the attainment and the increase of holiness. Of every man living, and of every man alike, this is the highest interest, and the highest duty. To this end, as to the former, which is indeed inseparably united with this, the sabbath is indispensable.

The sabbath is eminently moral, also, as the indispensable means of preserving in the world a real and voluntary obedience of all the other commands in the decalogue. Wherever the sabbath is not, religion dies of course ; and morality of every kind, except so far as convenience and selfishness may keep the forms of it alive, is forgotten. But all those means which are indispensable to the existence of morality, or, in better language, religion, are themselves of a moral nature, and of universal obligation ; since, without them, nothing moral could exist.

It makes no difference here, whether we could have known without information from God, that one day in seven would be the best time, and furnish the best manner of performing these things, or not. It is sufficient that we know it now.

Thus the *fourth* command is of a really moral nature, no less than the others, and as truly of incalculable importance, and indispensable obligation, to

all the children of Adam. Its place in the decalogue, therefore, was given it with consummate propriety; and 'what God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.'

If it were intended to abolish a command given so plainly, and with circumstances of such amazing solemnity, the abrogation would, undoubtedly, have been communicated in a manner equally clear with that in which the command itself was originally given. But the Scriptures contain nothing which resembles an abrogation of it, communicated either clearly or obscurely. When Christ abolished the *ceremonial* and *civil* laws of the Jews, so far as they might be thought to extend to the Gentiles, and taught the true moral system of the Old Testament, and when the apostles afterward completed the evangelical account of this subject, it is, I think, incredible, that, if this precept were to be abolished at all, neither he nor they should give a single hint concerning the abolition. As both have left it just where they found it, without even intimating that it was at all to be annulled, we may reasonably conclude that its obligation has never been lessened.

In the mean time, it ought to be observed, that many other precepts comprised in the Mosaic law, which are universally acknowledged to be of a moral nature, were nevertheless not introduced into the decalogue, were not spoken by the voice of God, nor written with his finger, nor placed on the tables of stone fashioned by himself. Why was this supreme distinction made in favour of the precept now under discussion? This question I may perhaps answer more particularly hereafter. It is sufficient to observe at present, that it arose solely from the superior importance of the precept itself.

2. *The perpetual establishment of the sabbath is evident from its original institution.*

Of this we have the following account in Genesis 1—3: 'Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made.

And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested from all his work, which God created and made.' The proofs which this passage affords for the perpetuity of the sabbath, respect *the time*, and *the end*, of the institution.

The *time* of the institution was the seventh day after the creation was begun, and on the first day after it was ended. At this time none of the human race were in being, but our first parents. For *them* the sabbath was instituted; and clearly, therefore, for all their posterity also. If it was not instituted for *all* their posterity, it was not instituted for *any* of them; for, certainly, there can be no reason given why it was instituted for one more than another. The Jews, particularly, were no more nearly connected with Adam than we are; and no more interested in any thing commanded to him than are the Gentiles. Accordingly, it is, so far as I know universally conceded, that, if the sabbath was instituted at this time, it is obligatory on all men to the end of the world.

The resting of God on this day, alleged in the text as a primary and authoritative reason why the sabbath should be kept holy, is a reason extending to all men alike. In my own view it is incredible that God should rest on this day to furnish an example to the Jewish nation merely of observing the sabbath, or that so solemn a transaction as this, in its own nature affecting the whole human race alike, should be intentionally confined in its influence to a ten thousandth part of mankind. The example of God, so far as it is imitable, is in its very nature authoritative and obligatory on every intelligent creature, and in the present case plainly on the whole human race. For man to limit it, where God himself has not been pleased to limit it, is evidently unwarrantable, and indefensible.

The *end* of the institution plainly holds out the same universality of obligation. I have already observed, that this is twofold; viz. to commemorate the glory of God displayed in the creation; and

attain and increase holiness in the soul of man. I have also observed, that all men are alike interested in both these objects. Nor can there be a single pretence, that any nation, or any person, is more interested in either, than any other person, or nation. Every individual stands in exactly the same relations to God, is under exactly the same obligations, and is bound in this case to duties exactly the same.

3. *The perpetuity of the sabbath is clearly taught in Isaiah lvi. 6—8.* ‘Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants; every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be acceptable on my altar: for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all people. The Lord God, who gathereth the outcasts of Israel, saith, Yet will I gather others to him, beside those that are gathered unto him.’

From this passage it is evident, that when the house of God shall become a house of prayer for all people, and when the outcasts of Israel, and others beside them, shall be gathered unto him, that is, Christ; then the sabbath shall continue a divine institution; that it shall be a duty to keep it from polluting it; and that those who keep it, particularly the sons of the stranger, or the Gentile nations, shall be accepted and blessed in thus keeping it, and shall be made joyful in God’s house of prayer.

But the house of God was never, in any sense, called ‘A house of prayer for all people,’ until after the dispensation of the gospel began; viz. until the house of God was found ‘wherever two or three met together in the name of Christ;’ until the period when mankind were to ‘worship God, neither in Jerusalem, nor in the mountain of Samaria, but wherever they worshipped in spirit and in truth.’ Under this dispensation, therefore, the sabbath was still to continue a divine institution; was to be kept

free from pollution; and the keeping of it was to be blessed, according to the declarations of the unerring Spirit of prophecy.

This prediction is a part of the unchangeable counsels of Jehovah. It could not have been written, unless it had been true. It could not have been true, unless fulfilled by this very observation of the sabbath. The sabbath could not have been thus observed, and men could not have been thus blessed in observing it, unless at the very time of this observance, it had still remained an institution of God. For God himself has declared, that mankind 'shall not add to his words, nor diminish aught from them;' and that, instead of blessing those who add to the words written in the Scriptures, he will 'add to them the plagues which are written in the Scriptures.' But to add to the *institutions* of God, is to add to his *word*, in the most arrogant and guilty manner. If the sabbath be not now a divine institution, he who observes it as such, adds to the institutions of God, and is grossly guilty of this arrogance. He may therefore certainly, as well as justly, expect to find a curse, and not a blessing; to be destroyed with a more terrible destruction than that which Nadab and Abihu experienced, for adding to the institutions of God one of their own, of a far less extraordinary and guilty nature.

But how different from all this has been the fact! How exactly, as well as gloriously, has this prediction been fulfilled! God has really 'gathered unto Christ others, beside the outcasts of Israel.' The Gentiles, 'the sons of the stranger,' have, in immense multitudes, 'joined themselves to the Lord—they have served him—they have loved his name—they have kept the sabbath from polluting it—they have taken hold of his covenant—they have been made joyful in his house of prayer—and their sacrifices and their burnt-offerings have been accepted upon his altar—and his house has been called a house of prayer for all people.' Thus, as Isaiah predicted, there has actually been a sabbath under the

dispensation of the gospel, remaining now for almost eighteen hundred years ; and this sabbath has been attended with the peculiar blessings predicted by this evangelical prophet.

4. *The perpetuity of the sabbath is fairly argued from Psalm cxviii. 19—26.* ‘Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them ; and I will praise the Lord. This gate of the Lord, into which the righteous shall enter. I will praise thee ; for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation. The stone which the builders refused, is become the head-stone of the corner. This is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day which the Lord hath made : we will rejoice, and be glad in it. Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord: O Lord, I beseech thee, send now prosperity ! Blessed be he, that cometh in the name of the Lord. We have blessed you out of the house of the Lord.’

This psalm, particularly the prophecy contained in these words, is explained by St. Peter, as referring to *Christ* ; the true ‘head-stone of the corner’ rejected by the Jewish builders ; and, of course, as referring to the times of the Christian dispensation. In these times, then, there was to be ‘a day which the Lord had made ;’ not in the literal sense ; for in this sense he had made all days ; but in the spiritual sense ; that is, a day which he had sanctified, consecrated to himself, devoted to his own worship ; of a common and secular day, made into a holy and religious one. It was a day on which ‘the gates of righteousness’ were to be ‘opened :’ that is, the gates of the sanctuary, or house of God ; and styled ‘the gate (or gates) of the Lord.’ It was a day on which ‘the righteous,’ as a body, were to ‘enter into them.’ It was the day on which ‘the Lord became their salvation.’ It was the day on which ‘the stone rejected by the builders, became the head-stone of the corner.’ It was a day on which prayers were to be offered up, and praises to be sung to God. Finally, it was a day in which the righteous were to receive blessings from the house of the Lord.

All my audience must have anticipated the conclusion, as flowing irresistibly even from this slight examination of the passage ; that this was a day devoted to *religious employments*, and particularly to the *public worship of God*. It is equally evident, that it is the day on which *Christ arose from the dead*, or, in other words, ' became the head-stone of the corner.' It is, therefore, *the sabbath* ; the only day ever devoted to purposes of this nature by the authority of inspiration. It is a sabbath also existing *under the gospel*, or, *after the resurrection of Christ*. Of course, it is to continue to the end of the world ; for all the institutions which exist under the gospel are perpetual.

5. *The perpetual establishment of the sabbath is evident from Revelation i. 10 ; ' I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day.'*

The Book of Revelation was probably written about the year 96, and of course many years after the resurrection of Christ. At this time, there was a day generally known to Christians by the name of the *Lord's day*. It was also entitled the Lord's day, by the pen of St. John, under the immediate influence of inspiration. It was therefore so called with the approbation of the Spirit of truth. But this could not have been, unless it had been originally instituted by God himself. That the apostle, in this manner of mentioning it, accords intentionally with this denomination, as being the proper one, will I presume not be disputed ; because the contrary supposition would make him lend his own sanction to a false as well as an unauthorized denomination of this day, and to the *false doctrine* involved in it ; viz. that there was a day consecrated with propriety to the Lord ; or, in other words, consecrated by *divine appointment* ; since no other consecration of it would have any propriety. If this doctrine were false, as according to the supposition it must be, it could not fail to prove in a high degree dangerous ; as it would naturally lead all who read his book to hold a religious institution as established by God, which he had not in fact appointed ; and thus, by ' worshipping

him according to the commandments of men,' to worship him 'in vain.' The guilt and the mischiefs of this doctrine, thus received and obeyed, would be incomprehensible. The Spirit of truth, who directed the pen of St. John, cannot have sanctioned this doctrine, unless it were true; nor have given this denomination to the day spoken of, unless it were given by the will of God.

There was therefore at the period specified, and under the gospel, a day holden by the apostle, by Christians generally, and by God himself, as the Lord's day; or a day peculiarly consecrated to Christ, the Lord mentioned by St. John in this passage. There is now, there has always been, but one such day; and but one manner in which a day can be the Lord's. This day is the sabbath; a holy, heavenly rest from every sinful and every secular concern. It is his, by being authoritatively appropriated to his use by himself; and by his requiring mankind, whenever it returns, to consecrate their time, their talents, and themselves to his immediate service and religious worship. As then there was such a day, a day consecrated to the Lord, a sabbath, at the time when the Revelation of St. John was written, so this day is perpetually established. For every institution under the gospel, the last dispensation of God to mankind, will remain in full force to the end of the world.

SERMON CVI.

THE LAW OF GOD. THE DECALOGUE.

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT.

THE CHANGE OF THE SABBATH.

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Remember the sabbath-day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath-day, and hallowed it.—EXOD. XX. 8—11.

In the preceding Discourse, from these words I proposed to consider,

- I. *The perpetual establishment of the sabbath; and,*
- II. *The manner in which it is to be observed.*

The first of these propositions I examined at some length in that Discourse; and shall now go on to offer some additional observations concerning the same subject. If I have proved, as I flatter myself I have, that the sabbath is an institution designed to last to the end of the world, it will naturally occur to my audience, as a question of prime importance in the consideration of this subject, ‘Why is it, that you and other Christians, instead of observing the sabbath originally instituted, keep another day as the sabbath; a day, of which no mention was made in the institution, and for the religious observation of which we find no express command either in the Old or New Testament?’

This question is certainly asked with unobjectionable propriety; and certainly demands a candid and satisfactory answer. Such an answer I will now endeavour to give.

It is unquestionably true, that the institution, whatever it is, is to be taken as we find it in the Scriptures; and that men are in no respect to change it. He who made it, is the only being in the universe who has the right to abrogate or to alter that which he has made. As we find it then in the Scriptures, we are bound to take it, whether agreeable to our own ideas of wisdom and propriety, or not.

In order to explain my own views of this subject it will be useful to observe, that *this institution obviously consists of two parts; the sabbath, or holy rest; and the day, on which it is holden.* These are plainly alluded to, as distinct from each other, in the text; where it is said, 'The Lord rested on the seventh day, and blessed the sabbath-day, and hallowed it.' This language is chosen of design; and, as I apprehend, with a propriety, intentionally instructive to us. God did not *bless* the seventh day, nor *hallow* it as the *seventh* day; but only as being *the day* on which the *sabbath*, or the *holy rest*, was to be kept. Were the sabbath then warrantably to be kept, at different periods, on each of the days of the week, the blessing would follow it, on whatever day it was holden.

It was plain, then, that *the sabbath*, being a thing entirely distinct from *the day on which it is kept*, may be a perpetual institution; and yet be kept, if God should so order it, on any, or successively on all, the days of the week. If then the day on which the sabbath was to be holden, should by divine appointment be a different one from that which was originally established, the sabbath itself, the substance of the institution, might still remain the same. All that would be changed, would plainly be a given day of the week; a thing perfectly circumstantial; and of no other importance than that which circumstances gave it.

The *day*, I say, might be altered without altering at all the *substance* of the institution. Still it could be altered only by divine appointment. The same authority which instituted the sabbath, appointed

also the day on which it was to be holden : and no other authority is competent to change either in any degree. If then we cannot find in the Scriptures plain and ample proofs of an abrogation of the original day, or the substitution of a new one, the day undoubtedly remains in full force and obligation, and is now religiously to be celebrated by all the race of Adam. It shall be the business of this Discourse to collect to a point the light which the Scriptures afford us concerning this important subject.

1. *The nature of the subject furnishes room to suppose, that the day on which the sabbath was to be celebrated under the Christian dispensation, might be a different one from that which was originally appointed.*

The end of the institution mentioned in the text, is the commemoration of the glory of God in the creation of the world. The reason why God chose that the manifestation of himself in that wonderful work should be commemorated, rather than that which was made in the deluge, or the deliverance of the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt, was, it is presumed, the peculiar greatness of the work itself, and of the display which it furnished of his perfections. If this be admitted, as it probably will be by every sober man, it must also be admitted, that we ought, according to this scheme, to expect any other work of God, of still greater importance, and more glorious to the divine character than the creation itself, to be commemorated with equal or greater solemnity. But the work of redemption, or, as it is sometimes styled in the Scriptures, the new creation, is a more glorious work than that of creating the heavens and the earth. This doctrine may be elucidated by the following considerations :—

1. *The agent in both these works is the same.* St. Paul expressly declares, That Christ ‘in the beginning laid the foundations of the earth ; that the heavens are the work of his hands ;’ Heb. i. 10 ; and that ‘all things visible and invisible were created by him and for him,’ Col. i. 16. St. John also teaches us, that ‘all things were made by him ;

and that without him there was not one thing made which has existed,' John i. 3. The same person, therefore, is honoured in a commemoration of both these wonderful works.

(2.) *The end of a work, that is, the reason for which it is done, is of more importance than the work itself* This truth will be admitted on all hands. No intelligent being, who claims the character of wisdom, ever undertakes a work, without an end sufficiently important to justify the means adopted for its accomplishment. Much less will this be supposed of God. But *the end of creation is providence*; and, of all the works of providence, *the work of redemption, or the new creation, is incalculably the most important*; the hinge on which all the rest turn; the work, towards the completion of which all the rest are directed; in a word, the end of them all. Accordingly, St. Paul says, 'Who created all things by Jesus Christ, to the intent, that now unto principalities and powers, in heavenly places, might be known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God.' The display of the wisdom of God, by the church, in the work of redemption, was therefore the *intent, or end*, for which all things were created by Jesus Christ. Without the work of redemption, then, the purpose of God in creating all things, and the real use of the things themselves, would have been prevented.

(3.) The superior importance of the new creation is evident in this fact; that the *old creation*, by its unceasing changes, *continually decays and degenerates*, while the *new creation* becomes by its own changes, *unceasingly brighter and better*.

(4.) The *old creation* is a *transitory work*, made for consumption by fire; whereas the *new* is intended for *eternal duration*.

Thus from the nature of the case there is ample room to suppose, that the work of redemption might, by divine appointment, be commemorated preferably to the work of creation.

2. *It is expressly foretold by the prophet Isaiah, that*

the work of redemption shall be commemorated in preference to the work of creation.

Isaiah lxx 17, 18. 'For behold,' saith God, 'I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered, neither shall it come into mind. But be ye glad, and rejoice for ever, in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and my people a joy.' In this passage of Scripture we are informed, that God designed to create what in the first of these verses is called, 'new heavens and a new earth.' This, in the second verse, is explained in simple language; and is said to be 'creating the people of God a joy and a rejoicing.' In other words, it is no other than redeeming and sanctifying the souls of men; by means of which, they become a rejoicing to God, and to each other.

In this declaration of the prophet there are two things particularly claiming our attention. The first is, that the new creation, or the work of redemption, is of far greater importance in the eye of God than the former creation. The second is an express prediction, that the former creation shall not be remembered by the church, nor come into mind; or, in other words, shall not be commemorated. This I understand, as almost all similar Jewish phrases are to be understood, in a comparative sense; and suppose the prophet to intend, that it shall be *far less* remembered and commemorated, as being of far less importance.

That this passage refers to the times of the evangelical dispensation is certain from the prediction itself: since the new creation is the very subject of it, and the commencement of that dispensation. It is equally evident also from the whole strain of the chapter.

This passage appears to me to place the fact in the clearest light, that a particular, superior, and extraordinary commemoration of the work of redemption by the Christian church, in all its various ages, was a part of the good pleasure of God, and was designed by him to be accomplished in the

course of his providence. But there neither is, nor ever was, any public, solemn commemoration of this work by the Christian church, except that which is holden on the first day of the week; or the day in which Christ completed this great work by his resurrection from the dead. This prophecy has, therefore, been unfulfilled, so far as I see, unless it has been fulfilled in this very manner. But if it has been fulfilled in this manner, then this manner of fulfilling it has been agreeable to the true intention of the prophecy, and to the good pleasure of God expressed in it; and is, therefore, that very part of the system of his providence which is here unfolded to mankind.

At the same time, it is to be remembered, that the former institution is still substantially preserved. The sabbath still returns upon one day in seven. The great facts, that 'in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day,' are still presented to the mind in their full force. The work of creating the heavens and the earth is therefore regularly commemorated, according to the original institution of God; while the new creation, as its importance demands, and as this prophecy directly foretels, takes its own superior place in the commemoration. Thus the institution, instead of being abrogated in every respect, is only changed in such a manner as to enlarge its usefulness and importance to mankind, and to become a solemn memorial of two wonderful works of God, instead of one. The *sabbath itself* is unchanged. It still returns at the end of seven days. It is still a memorial of the creation. But the institution is enlarged in such a manner, as to commemorate also the work of redemption.

With this prophecy facts have corresponded in a wonderful manner. All Christians commemorate the work of creation in their prayers and praises, their religious meditations and discourses, from sabbath to sabbath. But every Christian perfectly well knows, that the work of redemption holds a far

higher place in every private, and in every public religious service; and that, according to the declaration of God in this passage, 'the former is,' comparatively, 'not remembered, neither does it come into mind.' At the same time, the work of redemption is not merely the chief, but the only means of originating holiness in the soul, and altogether the principal means of advancing it towards perfection. In every respect, therefore, the Christian sabbath is now better suited to the great ends of the institution, than the original day. Until the time of Christ's resurrection, the seventh day commemorated the most glorious work which God had ever accomplished, and the most wonderful display of the divine perfections. But by the resurrection of Christ, a new and far more glorious work was finished. While the sabbath therefore was by divine appointment kept on the seventh day, it was exactly suited to the purpose of commemorating the most glorious work of God which had ever taken place. But after the resurrection of Christ, the first day of the week was plainly better fitted than any other day to become a religious memorial of both these wonderful works, by being the day on which Christ arose from the dead, and by returning regularly at the end of every six days. Whatever other opinions we adopt concerning this subject, it must, I think, be readily acknowledged, that no other day could possibly combine all these advantages.

This important consideration seems to be plainly intimated in the text. 'Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. The seventh day is the sabbath. In six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is; wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath-day, and hallowed it.' It cannot escape the notice of every reader of this passage, that the duty of remembering the sabbath, to keep it holy, enjoined at the beginning, and the blessing and consecration mentioned at the end, are applied to the sabbath, and not to the day; and that the seventh day is declared to be 'the sabbath-day,' or

the day on which the sabbath is to be holden. The meaning of this is, obviously, that the seventh day is, or was at that time, the existing day of the sabbath; without determining how long it should continue to possess this character. God established it indefinitely; and, unless he should be pleased to change it, perpetually, as the day of the sabbath. But on whatever day he should think fit to establish the sabbath, it was to be remembered, and kept holy. The blessing also, and the sanctification, were annexed to the sabbath-day, and not to the seventh. In this manner the Christian church became informed of their duty, whenever the day should be changed; and, if they performed it faithfully, were assured of this peculiar blessing. Thus, also, they were preserved from the fears, which might otherwise arise, of losing the blessing annexed to the sabbath, whenever the day on which it should be holden should be changed. Had the blessing, in this command, been annexed to the seventh day, it would probably have occasioned an immoveable perplexity to the Christian church, had they found the present account of the sabbath contained in the New Testament.

3. *The hundred and eighteenth Psalm is a direct prediction, that the day of Christ's resurrection was to be the day on which the sabbath should be holden under the gospel.*

In the 14th verse of this Psalm the divine writer declares, that 'the Lord is his strength, and his song; and is become his salvation.' This fact we know was accomplished, when Christ rose from the dead. In consequence of this great event, he hears 'the voice of rejoicing, and of salvation, in the tabernacles of the righteous,' or in the house of God. In the 19th verse he says, 'Open to me the gates of righteousness. I will praise thee; for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation.' This event he again describes in a new, and under a very different image: 'The stone which the builders refused is become the head-stone of the corner.' He

then subjoins, 'This is the day which the Lord hath made : ' that is, the day which Christ consecrated, or made into a holy day, when he became ' the head-stone of the corner : ' that is, when he arose from the dead. He then adds, ' we will rejoice and be glad in it : ' that is, we, the righteous, the church of God ; for in *their* name he speaks throughout all the latter part of this psalm, whether speaking in the singular, or plural. In their name he says, in the following verse, ' Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord ! O Lord ! I beseech thee, send now prosperity. Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.' The words of the two last-mentioned verses are applied directly to Christ, by the multitudes who accompanied him in his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. ' The multitudes,' saith St. Matthew, ' cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David ! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord ! Hosanna in the highest ! ' The words of the last verse are also applied by Christ to himself, Matt. xxiv. 39, ' For I say unto you, ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.' The comment of the multitudes is reasonably supposed to be that of the Jewish church in general. That of Christ, and that of St. Peter, mentioned in the preceding discourse, are the decisive law of interpretation to the Christian church. We are, therefore, warranted to conclude, that the psalmist here declares, not only the joy and gladness of the Christian church in the *resurrection* of Christ, but in the *day* on which he arose : for he says, ' This is the *day* which the Lord hath made ; we will rejoice and be glad in it.' This day he also declares to be a day of public worship ; a day on which the gates of righteousness were to be opened, and ' the righteous,' or the church, as a body, were to enter them, and on which the ministers of the gospel were to ' bless' them (in the Jewish language, or language of the temple service) ' out of the house of the Lord ; ' or, in language adapted to the Christian manner of worship, in the house of the Lord. The substance of this comment

is beautifully given by Dr. Watts, in the two following stanzas.

- The work, O Lord, is thine,
And wond'rous in our eyes;
This day declares it all divine;
This day did Jesus rise.
- This is the glorious day
That our Redeemer made:
Let us rejoice, and sing, and pray,
Let all the church be glad.

4. *Christ has indicated, that the seventh day should cease to be the sabbath after his resurrection.*

In Matt. ix. 14, we are informed, that the disciples of John came to him, and inquired of him why his disciples did not fast, as well as themselves, and the Pharisees. Christ replied, 'Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.' Christ was crucified and buried on Friday. At the close, then, of this day he was taken from the children of the bridechamber; that is, from his disciples. Throughout Saturday he lay in the grave. On the first day of the week, the Christian sabbath, he was restored to them again. This then became to them the proper season of fasting, according to his own declaration. But the sabbath was a festival from the beginning. Such it continues to be unto the end. That it was to be such to the Christian church is amply proved by the passage formerly quoted from Isa. lvi. 6, 7, and from the express declarations just now quoted from Psalm cxviii. Fasting on this day can, therefore, never accord with its original and universal design. But on the seventh day, the day during which he lay in the grave, as he informs us, it was proper that they should fast. In this declaration it is indicated, not obscurely, that the seventh day would soon cease to be a season fitted for the observance of the sabbath. It must be obvious to the least reflection, that this

season of Christ's extreme humiliation is the most improper period conceivable for commemorating with joy and gladness the wonderful work of redemption. Every thing in this season must appear to a Christian to demand humiliation and mourning, rather than exultation. During this period the enemies of Christ prevailed against him; and 'the serpent,' according to the first prophecy ever given concerning him to this world, 'bruised his heel.' To rejoice on this day, would be to lay hold on the time of our Saviour's greatest sufferings and deepest humiliation as the proper season for our greatest exultation. This, certainly, was not the conduct of the apostles. They mourned in the most melancholy, and distressing manner. Nor do they appear ever to have regarded the seventh day afterward as the holy, joyful rest of God. On the contrary, they transferred this festival to another day.

5. *The apostles, by their example, have decisively taught us, that the day of Christ's resurrection was to be the Christian sabbath.*

On the first day of the week, the day of his resurrection, Christ met his disciples assembled together. On the first day of the week following he met them, again assembled together. On the first day of the week, at the feast called Pentecost, the Spirit descended in a miraculous and glorious manner upon the apostles. On the first day of the week, the disciples assembled together customarily, 'to break bread,' and to make charitable contributions for their suffering brethren. From the three first of these facts it is plain, that Christ thought fit to honour this day with peculiar tokens of his approbation. From the last, that the apostles thought themselves warranted to devote it to religious purposes.

I have already shewn above, and sufficiently, that God has absolutely prohibited all men, under severe denunciations, and with terrible expressions of his anger, either to form religious institutions, or to substitute *their own* institutions for his. It is clearly impossible, that the apostles, who have taught us

this very doctrine, should, under the influence of inspiration, disobey him in this interesting particular, by forming so remarkable a religious institution; abolishing that of God, and substituting their own in its place. Nothing is more evident to me, than that this example has all the weight which can be attached to any precept whatever. This will especially appear, if we remember that Peter with the eleven apostles celebrated the first day of the week, and that Paul and his followers did the same. Paul received his gospel immediately from Christ; and informs us, in Gal. ii. 6, that the apostles at Jerusalem '*added nothing to him.*' For three years he never saw one of them; and had not the remotest correspondence with them. All the doctrines, therefore, which Paul acknowledged, he received directly from Christ, and was indebted for none of them to his companions in the apostleship. Yet Peter and his followers observed the first day of the week as the religious day, and Paul and his followers observed the same. This is evident from his direction to the churches at Galatia and Corinth, to '*lay by them somewhat on the first day of the week,*' for the poor saints at Jerusalem. The reason why the first day of the week is pitched upon for this purpose is obviously this; that they assembled customarily on the first day of the week for religious purposes. Accordingly, in Acts xx. 7, we are informed, that the disciples in Troas came together on the first day of the week to break bread, and that Paul preached unto them, continuing his speech until midnight. But whence did these persons, thus separated, derive this agreement in their observance of the first day of the week? The only answer, which can be given to this question, is, From the *inspiration* which guided them *both*. Had they been uninspired, their agreement in a case of this nature, where they acted independently of each other, would have proved, that they derived the doctrine, and the practice grounded on it, from a common source. Their character as inspired men, and apostles, proves beyond

debate, that the common source, from which they thus harmoniously derived a religious institution, was God.

6. *The same doctrine is proved from the already cited passage, Rev. i. 10, 'I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day.'*

From this declaration it is evident, that in or about the year 96, when the Apocalypse was written and published, there was a day known and observed by Christians generally, as the Lord's day. This appellation was, I presume, derived from the passage before quoted from Psal. cxviii.; in which it is said concerning the day of Christ's resurrection, 'This is the day which the Lord hath made:' that is, hath made of a common into a holy day; or, in other words, consecrated to himself. But the day pointed out in this passage is the day on which Christ rose from the dead.

That this was in fact the day styled by St. John, 'the Lord's day,' is unanswerably evident from the history of the church; and it is equally evident, that the sabbath, or holy rest, together with all the religious services pertaining to it, were celebrated by the church on this day. Every one who has read with attention the New Testament must have observed that there is no hint, as well as no precept, directing Christians to celebrate the seventh day as holy time. The ancient Christians, particularly the Jewish Christians, when they had occasion to preach to the Jews, or to assemble with them, entered into their synagogues on the seventh day, and undoubtedly worshipped with them in their manner; but there is not the least reason to believe, either from the Acts, or from the Epistles, that they ever assembled of their own accord, on that day for religious services in a regular or customary manner.

Ignatius, a companion of the apostles, says, in so many words, 'Let us no more sabbatize;' that is, keep the Jewish sabbath, 'but let us keep the Lord's day, on which our Life arose.'

Justin Martyr, who lived at the close of the first

and the beginning of the second century, says, 'On the day, called Sunday, is an assembly of all who live in the city or country; and the memoirs of the apostles, and the writings of the prophets,' that is, the Old and New Testament, 'are read.' For this he assigns the reasons of the Christians; viz. 'that it was the day on which the creation of the world began, and on which Christ arose from the dead.'

Irenæus, a disciple of Polycarp, the disciple of St. John himself, who lived in the second century, says, 'On the Lord's day every one of us Christians keep the sabbath; meditating in the law,' or Scriptures, 'and rejoicing in the works of God.'

Dionysius, bishop of Corinth, who lived in the time of Irenæus, that is, in the second century, says, in his letter to the church at Rome, 'To-day we celebrate the Lord's day, when we read your epistle to us.'

Tertullian, who also lived in the second century, speaks of the Lord's day as a Christian solemnity.

Petavius declares, that 'but one Lord's day was observed in the earliest times of the church.'

It is indeed true, that in that miserable forgery, which professes itself to have been written by the apostles, and is styled, The Apostolical Constitutions; but which was plainly the work of some impostor, living in the latter end of the fourth, or the beginning of the fifth century, certainly not earlier, it is directed, that Christians should keep both the Jewish sabbath and the Lord's day, as religious festivals; and that every sabbath but one in the year, and every Lord's day, should be observed in this manner. It is also true, that in the fifth century both these days were kept in this manner by Christians generally, except the churches of Rome and Alexandria; who did not observe the Jewish sabbath as a religious day. This appears by the testimony of both Socrates and Sozomen. Concerning this subject Petavius declares, that 'the most holy fathers agreed, that the apostles never ordained any thing of this nature.' He also remarks, that 'he

council of Laodicea, which probably sat about the year 363, forbade, in their 29th canon, that Christians should rest from labour on the sabbath, or seventh day. For they say, ' Christians ought not to Judaize, nor to rest on the sabbath, that is, the seventh day ; but preferring the Lord's day to rest, if indeed it should be in their power, as Christians.' *

From these observations it is plain, that although in the fifth century many Christians had reverted to the observation of the Jewish sabbath, while yet they universally celebrated the Lord's day ; yet the practice, even in this period of miserable declension, was by no means universal. The churches of Rome and Alexandria never adopted it at all ; and others plainly adopted it, as they did a great multitude of other corruptions at the same time, merely from their own construction of the Scriptures. We cannot wonder that those, especially when we find among them celebrated ministers of religion, who admitted the *protection* and *invocation* of *saints* and *martyrs*, should admit any other corruption ; and that they should construe those passages of Scripture which speak of the sabbath as erroneously as they construed others.

7. *The same truth appears in this great fact, that God has perpetually and gloriously annexed his blessing to the Christian sabbath.*

If this day be not divinely instituted, then God has suffered his church to disuse and annihilate his own institution, and substitute one of mere human device in its stead. Will this be believed ? But this is not all : he has annexed the blessing which he originally united to the sabbath instituted by himself, to that which was the means of destroying it, and which was established by human authority merely. After requiring that men should add nothing to his words, and forbidding them to diminish aught from them ; after threatening the plagues denounced in the Scriptures to him who should add unto the words

which they contain ; and declaring that he would take away out of the book of life the part of him who should take away from the words written in the Scriptures ; can any man believe, that he would forsake, that he has forsaken, his own institution ; an institution of this magnitude ; an institution, on which have depended, in all lands and ages, the observation, influence, and existence, of his holy law Can any man believe, that he who so dreadfully punished Nadab and Abihu for forsaking his own institution, in a case of far inferior magnitude, and setting up one of their own in its stead, would not only not *punish*, but abundantly and unceasingly *bless* the Christian church, while perpetrating and persisting in iniquity of exactly the same nature, and far greater in degree ? The Christian, who can believe this, must be prepared to believe any thing.

Had men *known nothing* concerning the institution of God, the charity of their fellow-men might be naturally enough extended to them, while employed in religiously commemorating Christ's resurrection. The appearance of piety in such a commemoration, and their freedom from the impiety of intruding upon a divine institution, might induce others to think favourably of their conduct. But in the case in hand, the institution was begun by the apostles, men inspired, chosen followers of Christ, and the rectors of his kingdom in the world. If they sinned, they sinned wilfully, and in defiance of their inspiration. With *them*, however, the blessing began to be annexed to this day in a most wonderful and glorious manner. From *them* it has been uninterruptedly continued to the present time. To this day, under God, as a primary mean, mankind are indebted for all the religion which has been in the world from the days of the apostles. If then the Christian sabbath is not a divine institution, God has made a device of man a more powerful support to his spiritual kingdom, a more efficacious instrument of diffusing truth and righteousness, than most, perhaps than all, others : while, at the same time, he

has, so far as I am able to discern, wholly neglected and forgotten a most solemn institution of his own. Thus a human device has been a peculiar, if not a singular, means of accomplishing the greatest glory to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and men, it would seem, will in the end 'have whereof to glory before God.'

This blessing has been too evident, too uniform, and too long continued, to admit of a doubt; too great and too wonderful to be passed over in silence. On this day, the perfections of God, manifested in the amazing works of creation and redemption, have, more than on all others, been solemnly, gratefully, and joyfully remembered and celebrated. On this day, millions of the human race have been born unto God. On this day, Christians have ever found their prime blessings. From the word and ordinances of God, from the influences of the Holy Spirit, from the presence of Christ in his church, Christians have derived on this day, more than on all others, the most delightful views of the divine character, clear apprehensions of their own duty, lively devotion to the service of God, strength to overcome temptations, and glorious anticipations of immortality. Take this day from the calendar of the Christian, and all that remains will be clouded and cheerless. Religion will instantly decay. Ignorance, error, and vice will immediately triumph, the sense of duty vanish, morals fade away, the acknowledgment, and even the remembrance of God be far removed from mankind, the glad tidings of salvation cease to sound, and the communication between earth and heaven be cut off for ever.

SERMON CVII.

THE LAW OF GOD. THE DECALOGUE.

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT.

OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.
HEB. iv. 9.

IN the two preceding Discourses I have, according to the scheme originally proposed, endeavoured to prove the perpetual establishment of the sabbath as a divine institution; and to shew, that the day on which it is by divine appointment to be holden by the Christian church, is the day of Christ's resurrection.

In the following Discourse I shall proceed to consider *the objections* which have been made to this doctrine. As all the important objections within my knowledge are adduced by the late archdeacon Paley, it is my design to reply to this respectable writer in form; such a reply being, in my own apprehension, all that is necessary with respect to the subject at large.

The text I consider as a direct assertion, that *there is a sabbath in the Christian church*, explained by the verse following to be founded on the fact, that Christ rested from his labours in the work of redemption; as the seventh day sabbath was founded on the fact, that God rested on that day from his labours in the work of creation. 'For he that hath entered into his rest, even he hath rested from his works, as God did from his own.' The word, translated *rest*, in the text, is *σαββατισμος*. Ainsworth, a man eminently qualified to judge of this subject, translates Exod. xvi. 23, thus: 'This is that which Jehovah hath spoken: To-morrow is the sabbatism, the sabbath of holiness to Jehovah.' In the same manner he translates Exod. xxxi. 15 Lev. xxiii. 3,

and xxv. 4. In commenting on Exod. xvi. 23, he says, 'Sabbatism, rest: that is, rest, or cessation. But as the Hebrew, *shabbath*, is retained by the Holy Ghost in the Greek *σαββατον*, so the Hebrew *shabbathon*, here used, is by the apostle, *σαββατισμος*, in Heb. iv. 9.' The verse ought therefore to be rendered, 'There remaineth therefore a sabbatism (or holy sabbath) to the people of God:' and this day the following verse proves to be the day on which Christ rose from the dead.

The reason why I have not adduced this passage of Scripture, together with those immediately connected with it, in proof of the doctrine under debate, is, that a comment on a paragraph so obscurely written, and demanding so particular an explanation, must be very long; and would probably be very tedious to many of my audience.

I. The first and great objection of Dr. Paley to the perpetuity of the sabbath is, that the account of its original institution is found in the following passage: Exod. xvi. 22—30: 'And it came to pass that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man: and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. And he said unto them, This is that which the Lord hath said, To-morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord: Bake that which ye will bake to-day, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over, lay up for you, to be kept until the morning. And they laid it up till the morning, as Moses bade. And Moses said, Eat that to-day; for to-day is a sabbath unto the Lord: to-day ye shall not find it in the field. Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the sabbath, in it there shall be none. And it came to pass, that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none. And the Lord said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my statutes and my laws? See, for that the Lord hath given you the sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days: abide ye every man in his place.

Let no man go out of his place on the seventh day. So the people rested on the seventh day.'

The argument here, is wholly derived from this phraseology : *To-morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord. To-day is a sabbath unto the Lord : and, the Lord hath given you the sabbath.* In these expressions, Dr. Paley thinks he finds the first institution of the sabbath. In my view, however, after examining long, and often, the arguments of this respectable writer, they appear to lead to the contrary conclusion. It is to be observed, that the whole argument depends on *the first* of these passages ; because, *that* being once introduced, the rest would, in the case supposed, follow it of course ; and because they refer directly to it, and are grounded upon it.

As a preface to the answer which I intend to make to this argument, I remark, that the words of Moses are addressed to 'the elders of Israel,' who had complained to him of the improper conduct of their countrymen, for gathering twice as much bread on the sixth day as they customarily gathered on other days. As Moses had forbidden them to leave of it till morning, and undoubtedly by divine inspiration, the elders supposed their countrymen to have trespassed in collecting this double quantity upon the sixth day. Upon this part of the story I observe,

1. *That the division of time into weeks was perfectly known to the Israelites.* This is proved by the phrases, 'the sixth day,' and the 'seventh day ;' obviously referring to the days of the *week*, and not to the days of the *month*. Now I ask, Whence had these people this scheme in dividing time, unless from the history of the creation, traditionally conveyed down to them ? This tradition, it will be observed, could come to them from Adam through six persons ; Methuselah, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, Joseph, and Amram.

2. Although in the 5th verse God informed Moses, that the congregation should gather twice as much on the sixth day ; it seems highly probable, if not absolutely certain, that Moses did not inform *THEM*. For we find that *the elders*, who would, I think, cer-

tainly have received this information *first*, were plainly ignorant of it. The people, therefore, seem to have supposed the ensuing day to be the sabbath, of their own accord; and for this reason to have ventured to gather a double quantity of manna, from an apprehension that the labour would be improper and unlawful on that day. Some of them, indeed, went out from a spirit of rebellion and unbelief, and probably under the influence of an idle curiosity, to learn whether the manna would descend on that day, contrary to the prediction of Moses, or not. But this fact affects not the argument in hand.

Let me now ask, whether *the first* of these declarations of Moses, 'This is that which the Lord hath said, To-morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord,' is the language of a man speaking of a thing *altogether new and unheard of*; of a thing totally different from all other things hitherto known in the world; or the language of a man referring to something *already known*, and speaking to persons, who, although acquainted with the institution itself, had an imperfect knowledge of the proper day on which it was to be holden; and were therefore uncertain with respect to this point? Were two of us to appoint a future day of the month (say the second of December) for the transaction of certain business; a third, who was present, would naturally observe, if such were the fact, that the second of December will be the sabbath. Or were we conversing upon the same subject on the first of December, the same person would naturally say, 'To-morrow is the sabbath.' These, you will observe, are the very words of Moses. Here we are unmindful, and through forgetfulness ignorant, that the sabbath is to take place on that day. Yet we are perfectly acquainted with the institution generally; and that we are acquainted with it, this phraseology is direct proof; because it springs from these very circumstances, and would, in the case stated, be used by all men.

But, if the institution were wholly unknown, would not the reply be made in terms equivalent to the fol-

lowing : ' We cannot meet on the morrow, or the second of December, for this business ; because the legislature has by law forbidden all the inhabitants to do business on that day ; and has required them to assemble for the worship of God, and to abstain from every secular pursuit.' To this answer would naturally succeed inquiries concerning the fact, the time, and the end of passing the law ; the motives which led to it ; the terms in which it was couched, its requisitions, and its penalties. No instance, it is presumed, can be found, in which the conversation concerning a new subject of this nature would be such as is here recorded by Moses, or in which it would not be substantially such as I have recited. On the contrary, the conversation in the case which I have supposed to be that of the Israelites, is always exactly that of Moses.

In this opinion I am established by the remarkable fact, that the Israelites make no inquiry concerning this supposed novel institution ; although so eminently important, and so plain an object of rational curiosity. The elders themselves, notwithstanding their zeal against the supposed transgression of the people, ask no questions, and make no reply. If the institution were new, and now first made known to them, this conduct is unaccountable. But if they were acquainted with the institution, and doubtful concerning the day, it was perfectly natural.

The reckoning of time at this, as well as many preceding and succeeding periods, it is well known, was extremely lame and confused. The Israelites, with respect to this subject, laboured under peculiar disadvantages. They had been long in a state of servitude ; and were of course ignorant, distressed, and naturally inattentive to this and other subjects of a similar nature. A reckoning would, indeed, be kept among them, however ignorant. But it must almost necessarily be imperfect, doubtful, and disputed. Different opinions concerning time would of course prevail.

Should it be said, that the causes which I have

specified would make them forget the institution itself; I answer, that other nations, as will be seen hereafter, did not forget it, but consecrated the seventh day to religious worship; although many, perhaps all, became ignorant of the day itself. We ourselves often forget the day of the month and week; while yet we are possessed of the most exact reckoning of time, and a perfect calendar; and are reminded of our time by so many books, papers, and other means.

Dr. Paley lays much stress on the words contained in the *third* declaration of Moses, which I have specified: 'The Lord hath given you the sabbath.' In the 23d verse, when the elders had reported to him the supposed transgression of their countrymen, in gathering a double portion of manna on the sixth day of the week, he answers, 'This is that which the Lord hath said; To-morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord;' that is, God declares to you, that the holy rest unto himself is to be holden on the morrow. 'Bake that which ye will bake to-day; and seethe that which ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you, to be kept until the morning.' The next day he renewed the same monition; and informed them farther, that there would be no manna on that day; nor on the seventh day at any *future period*. They were therefore to gather it on six days of the week only, and on every sixth day to provide the necessary supply for the seventh.

Some of the people, however, went out to gather manna on that very day, but found none. Upon this, God says to Moses, 'How long refuse ye to keep my commandments? See, for that the Lord hath given you the sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days.' The words, 'the Lord hath given you the sabbath,' are perfectly explained by the original declaration of Moses on this subject, made the preceding day, 'To-morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord.' This is the giving of the sabbath here referred to; and this, I flatter myself, has been shewn to be some-

thing widely different from originally instituting the sabbath.

The obvious explanation of these words here given, equally explains a passage in Ezekiel xx. 12, and another in Nehemiah ix. 14, quoted by Dr. Paley for the same purpose. The former of these is, 'Moreover, also, I gave them my sabbaths : ' the latter, 'Thou madest known unto them thy holy sabbath.' If the passage in Ezekiel refers to the *sabbath* at all, which may be doubted, it is merely a repetition of the words of Moses. If it refers to the various *fasts* and *feasts* of the Jews, frequently denominated sabbaths, it has no connexion with the subject. The latter of these passages accords more naturally and obviously with the account which has been here given, than with that of Dr. Paley. Neither of them, it is perfectly plain, furnishes the least additional support to his opinion.

Another argument for the same purpose is derived by this respectable writer from the following declaration, Exod. xxxi. 16, 17. 'It,' that is, the sabbath, 'is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever.' The same thing is also mentioned by Ezekiel, in nearly the same terms. Upon this Dr. Paley observes, 'Now it does not seem easy to understand how the sabbath could be a sign between God and the people of Israel, unless the observance of it was peculiar to that people, and designed to be so.'

The only question of importance here is, whether the fact, that the sabbath is made a sign between God and Israel, made it cease to be a memorial of the display of the divine perfections accomplished in the creation. If not, then the sabbath still remained at that time, and remains now, such a memorial. But I presume neither Dr. Paley himself, nor any other man, would say, that God, in making the sabbath a sign between him and Israel, intended to release them from commemorating on that day his perfections, thus displayed in the work of creation, and his own solemn commemoration of them, when

we rested at the close of this work upon the seventh day. But if the Israelites were not released from this commemoration by the passage in question, the rest of mankind could be affected by it in no manner whatever.

The truth is, that the ordinance which made the sabbath a sign to the Israelites, was subsequent to the promulgation of the decalogue, and cannot affect that law, even remotely ; as I shall soon demonstrate. In the same manner the sabbath was made a memorial of the deliverance of the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt, and a type of the promised rest in Canaan. These were all merely additional uses of the sabbath, to which it was happily applied, because they perfectly harmonized with its original design.

In Deuteronomy vi. 8, Moses, after reciting the decalogue, and the summary of it contained in the two great commands of the moral law, says to Israel, 'Thou shalt bind them, for a sign, upon thine hand.' A sign which the Israelites by the command of God were to bind upon their hands, was a sign between God and them, in the same manner as was the sabbath. Now I ask, whether it would be proper to say, that 'it does not seem easy to understand how the decalogue, and the two great commands in which it is summed up, could be a sign between God and the people of Israel, unless the observance of them was peculiar to that people, and designed to be so.'

What was intended by making the sabbath a sign between God and Israel, is declared by God himself in Ezekiel xx. 12 : 'I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them ; that they may know that I am Jehovah, who sanctify them.' It will not be denied, that the whole human race are equally interested with the Israelites in this knowledge. All that was peculiar to them was this ; they alone, for many ages, had, and it was foreseen by God that they would have, the knowledge in question ; and would be the only medium of communicating it to other nations. The sabbath, therefore, was so far

peculiarly a sign to them ; but it is obviously in its nature, and necessarily, a sign also, in a general sense, of the same knowledge to every nation afterward acquainted with the sabbath. From this very declaration in Ezekiel, in which the object of rendering the sabbath a sign to the Israelites is pointed out, it is clear that ' the observance of it was *not* designed to be peculiar to that people,' unless the knowledge of Jehovah was also to be perpetually confined to *them*.

Dr. Paley farther observes, ' If the sabbath be binding upon Christians, it must be binding as to the day, the duties, and the penalty ; in none of which it is received.'

It will be remembered, that the sabbath, and the day on which it is kept, are separate parts of the institution ; so separate, that the sabbath itself may be perpetual, and yet the day be changed successively, through every part of the week. The institution of day I have already acknowledged to be no less obligatory than that of the sabbath itself ; unless it can be fairly shewn to have been changed by the same authority. Whether this has, in fact, been shewn in the preceding Discourse, must be left for those who heard it to determine.

With regard to the *duties* of the sabbath, I shall only observe, that this point will be examined in a future Discourse.

As to the *penalty*, it will be remembered, that it is not contained in the decalogue ; but is merely a part of the civil law and internal police of the Jewish nation. Still, it may be useful to try this reasoning with other commands of the decalogue. In the two first precepts it is acknowledged that we, as well as the Israelites, are forbidden to worship idols, or other gods, beside Jehovah. Now it is well known that the Israelites who disobeyed these commands, were by the law of Moses to be put to death. It is presumed, that Dr. Paley would not believe this penalty to be binding upon us ; and that he would still acknowledge the commands themselves to be no less

obligatory upon *us* than upon *them*. It is presumed, also, that he would acknowledge the fifth command to be equally binding upon all men. In Deut. xxi. 18—21, and in Prov. xxx. 17, it is required, that children disobeying this command shalt be put to death. Would Dr. Paley acknowledge this penalty to be binding upon *us*? Or would he deny our obligation to obey the command?

II. It is asserted by this writer, that Genesis ii. 1—3, *does not contain an account of the original institution of the sabbath.*

This assertion he supports by the following reasons: 'That the observation of the sabbath is not mentioned in the history of the world before the call of Abraham; that it is not mentioned in the history of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; which, he says, is in many parts sufficiently circumstantial and domestic; that in Exodus xvi. no intimation is given that the sabbath then appointed was only the revival of an ancient institution, which had been neglected or forgotten; that no such neglect is imputed to the inhabitants of the old world, or to any part of the family of Noah; and that there is no record of any permission to dispense with the institution during the Egyptian bondage, or on any other public emergency.'

With regard to the last of these reasons, I answer only, that there is no record of any neglect of the institution, either during the Egyptian bondage, or during any other public emergency. During the Babylonish captivity, we have no record of any such permission, nor of any observance of the sabbath. Yet, as Nehemiah and his companions, plainly observed it after their return from that captivity, it is presumed Dr. Paley will not deny that it was observed by the Jewish nation during that whole period.

That no negligence of the sabbath should be charged to the Antediluvians, to Noah, or to any others, in cases where the sabbath is not even mentioned, can occasion no surprise; and, it is presumed,

can furnish no argument relative to this or any other question. It deserves, however, to be remarked, as an answer to every observation which can be made of this nature, that the first censure for any impropriety in the observation of the sabbath, uttered concerning the Israelites in the Scriptures, is found in the prophet Isaiah; about seven hundred and sixty years before Christ, and seven hundred and thirty-one years after the events recorded in Exodus xvi. The second is found in Ezekiel; written about five hundred and nine-thirty years before Christ, and eight hundred and ninety-seven years after these events. Can it, then, be surprising, when we know, from these very passages, that the Israelites merited not a little censure for their profanations of the sabbath, and when we yet find these to be the first censures cast upon them in the Scriptures, that Noah, his family, and the antediluvians, should not be censured?

The third of these reasons cannot, after what has been said in the former part of this Discourse, need any answer. I shall, therefore, direct the following observations to the two remaining reasons; perhaps with more propriety considered as one; viz. *the silence of the Scriptures concerning the observation of the sabbath by those who lived before the call of Abraham, and by the three first patriarchs.* Concerning this subject, I observe,

1. *If all these persons did in fact neglect or forget the institution, it would not alter the case at all.* The institution of booths is declared, in Nehemiah viii. 17, to have been neglected and forgotten, from the time of Joshua the son of Nun, until after Nehemiah and his companions returned from the captivity; a period of nine hundred and eighty years. Neither Samuel, David, Solomon, Hezekiah, nor Josiah observed it: and let it be remembered, that no censure is cast upon them for their neglect; nor any hint given, that they were guilty of such neglect, until the close of this long period, nor even then was any other notice taken of this subject, but what is contained in

this declaration of Nehemiah. Yet Nehemiah revived this solemnity; and has declared it to be obligatory upon that generation, and upon those of succeeding ages, in the same manner as if it had never been disused.

2. *There is no reason to suppose, that this fact would have been mentioned, if the sabbath had been exactly observed by the patriarchs, and by all who preceded them.* If sabbaths, in the plural, be supposed to denote the sabbath, then the first mention of this subject made after the time of Moses, occurs in 1 Chron. xxiii. 31, in the instructions of David to Solomon concerning building the temple, at the distance of near five hundred years. The same word occurs thrice in the same book; viz. in the eighth and thirty-first chapters; in the two former of these instances as a repetition of, or allusion to, the words of David, and both in the history of Solomon. The latter instance is in the history of Hezekiah, seven hundred and sixty-five years after the period above-mentioned. The same word occurs in Isaiah, about seven hundred and thirty years from that period. The word sabbath is mentioned five times in the history of the Jewish church before the captivity. The first of them is a mere note concerning the business of the Kohathites; which was 'to prepare the shew-bread every sabbath.' The time when it was written was that of David, near five hundred years after this period; see 1 Chron. ix. 32. The second is the speech of the Shunamite's husband; 'It is neither new moon, nor sabbath;' not referring, in my opinion, to the sabbath at all; almost six hundred years from the above period. The third is in 2 Kings xi.; a part of the speech of Jehoiada to the rulers of Judah. 'A third part of you, that enter in on the sabbath, shall even be keepers of the king's house; and two parts of all you that go forth on the sabbath, even they shall be keepers of the watch of the house of the Lord.' Immediately after this speech it is also subjoined, that 'the rulers took every man his men that were to come in on the sabbath, with them that

should go out on the sabbath, and they came to Jehoiada the priest.' These it will be remembered constitute but *a single instance* of mentioning the sabbath, an instance occurring at the distance of more than six hundred years. Another instance occurs in the history of Ahaz, and is the following; 'The covert for the sabbath turned he from the house of the Lord, for the king of Assyria:' seven hundred and fifty-two years. The word is also mentioned in Isaiah lvi. lviii. and lxx. about seven hundred and eighty years. These are all the instances, in which the word occurs either in prophecy or history, from the time of Moses till after the return of the captivity; a period of one thousand years.

Of this account it is to be observed,

(1.) That the word, *sabbaths*, in the plural, is mentioned four times in the history of the Jewish church, and twice in the prophecy of Isaiah, within a period of seven hundred and eighty years. The first, second, and third, occurring incidentally in the mention of the duty of the priest in the orders of David; the second, a repetition of them by Solomon; the third, in an account of their execution. These together really constitute but one instance. The fourth occurs incidentally also, in a sentence giving, in almost the same words, an account of the same duty of the priests in the time of Hezekiah. The fifth is a censure of the Jews for the pollution of the new moons and sabbaths, uttered by the prophet Isaiah. The three first of these instances occur at the distance of about five hundred years, the others between seven and eight hundred from the time of the supposed institution. In but one of these, and that the last, is there any thing like an account of the manner in which the sabbath was kept, or neglected. All the rest are merely incidental; and teach us nothing more than that sabbaths were in existence, and were involved in the Jewish ritual.

(2.) As *the sabbath* appears to be regularly distinguished from *sabbaths*; and as sabbaths are regularly joined with the *new moons*, and other holidays

of the Jews, which *the sabbath* never is; it is clear to me, that *the sabbath* is not alluded to in any of these instances.

(3.) The phrase, *the sabbath*, occurs in *three* instances (calling those in the account of Jehoiada one), in the history of the Jewish church before the captivity; all of them, however, entirely incidental, and containing no account of the sabbath as an institution, nor of the observance of it, nor of the neglect. This is all which is said of it before the return from the Babylonish captivity, except what is said by the prophet Isaiah: and there is but a single passage in this prophet, in which this phrase is used with reference to the times of the Jewish dispensation.

We are thus come to this conclusion, that there are but *five* passages, in which *the sabbath* is mentioned in the Jewish writings, from the time of Moses to the return of the captivity—one thousand years. Two of them are found in prophecy, and three of them in their history. The first of these is mentioned about five hundred years; the second, six hundred; and the third, seven hundred and fifty-two; and the two remaining ones which are found in prophecy, near eight hundred; from the time of the supposed institution.

Now let me ask, Can any person wonder that in an account so summary as the history of the three first Jewish patriarchs, there should be no mention of the sabbath; when also, during a period of about five hundred years, containing the histories of Joshua, of the Judges, particularly Samuel, and of Saul, it is not once mentioned? The question certainly cannot need an answer. The only wonder is, that so sensible a writer should have thought this an argument.

3. *God himself has, I apprehend, declared, that the sabbath was instituted at this time.*

For, in the first place, this is the true and only rational interpretation of the declarations in the second of Genesis. Dr. Paley supposes, that the

words of the historian, 'And God rested on the seventh day from all the work which he had made; and God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested from all his work, which God created and made;' declare only the reasons for which God blessed and sanctified the sabbath, and not the *time* at which this was done; and that it was mentioned at *this time*, only on account of its *connexion with the subject*, and not because the blessing and sanctification *took place* at this period. To this I answer, Moses has written this story exactly in the manner in which he has written the whole history of the creation, paradisiacal state, and the apostasy; nay, almost the whole of the history contained in the book of Genesis. There is as much reason to believe that the sabbath was blessed and sanctified at this time, from the manner in which the story is written, as there is to believe that our first parents were turned out of Paradise before the birth of Cain and Abel. The order of time is, I apprehend, exactly observed in the history, except where the historian has taken up again a particular part of the history, for the purpose of detailing it, and has for this end interrupted the general course of his narrative. Of the justice of this observation, the bare reading of the story will, I think, convince any person who has not a pre-conceived opinion to support.

What is thus sufficiently evident from the narrative, God appears to me to have decided in the following words of the text: 'For in six days the Lord made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that in them is; and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath-day, and hallowed (or sanctified) it.' Here God, repeating the very words of the narrative, declares, that he had already blessed and sanctified the sabbath, at some time preceding that at which this command was promulgated. The sabbath, therefore, was blessed and sanctified before this command was given. That this was not done at the time when Dr. Paley supposes the sabbath to

have been instituted, nor at any period between the first sabbath, and the giving of the law, seems to me clear from this, that there is not a single hint given of the subject, either at the time of the supposed institution, or in any other part of the Mosaic dispensation, except that in the second of Genesis. That the blessing was then given must I think be concluded, because God himself, relating this great transaction, adopts the same language; and says, 'Wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath-day, and allowed it.' That the blessing of the sabbath was a past transaction, is unquestionable. There is no hint concerning the existence of it, but in these two instances: and in both these it is immediately connected with God's finishing the creation, and resting on the seventh day.

4. That it was instituted *at the beginning* is evident from the fact, *that other nations, who could not have derived it from Moses, regarded the seventh day as holy.*

Hesiod says, 'Εβδομον ἱερὸν ἡμᾶς:—'The seventh day is holy.'

Homer and Callimachus give it the same title.

Theophilus of Antioch says, concerning the seventh day, 'The day which all mankind celebrate.'

Porphry says, 'The Phœnicians consecrated one day in seven as holy.'

Linus says, 'A seventh day is observed among saints, or holy people.'

Lucian says, 'The seventh day is given to school-boys as a holy day.'

Eusebius says, 'Almost all the philosophers, and poets, acknowledge the seventh day as holy.'

Clemens Alexandrinus says, 'The Greeks, as well as the Hebrews, observe the seventh day as holy.'

Josephus says, 'No city of Greeks, or barbarians, can be found, which does not acknowledge a seventh-day's rest from labour.'

Philo says, 'The seventh day is a festival to every nation.'

Tibullus says, 'The seventh day, which is kept holy by the Jews, is also a festival of the Roman women.'

The several nations here referred to, cannot, it is plain, have fallen upon this practice by chance. It is certain, they did not derive it from the Jews. It follows, therefore, that they received it by tradition from a common source; and that source must have been Noah and his family.

III. To the argument from the insertion of this command in the decalogue, Dr. Paley answers, that *the distinction between positive and moral precepts*, or, in his language, *between positive and natural duties*, was *unknown to the simplicity of ancient language*: meaning, I suppose, *that it was unknown to the ancients, and, among others, to Moses*: otherwise I cannot see how the observation is applicable to the question.

I confess myself surprised at this answer. Did not God understand this distinction, when he wrote the decalogue? Did he not know, that this distinction would afterward be made and understood, in all its influence? Was not the decalogue written for all who should read the Scriptures? Was it not so written, as to be adapted to the use of all for whom it was written? Did not God discern, that this distinction was founded in the nature of things; and did he not foresee that, although the Israelites should not perceive it during any period of their national existence, yet it still would be perceived by innumerable others of mankind? Did he not provide effectually for this fact, whenever it should happen; and for all the difficulties and doubts which might arise from the want of such a distinction?

From this observation, and several others, Dr. Paley appears to consider the decalogue as written by Moses in the same manner as the other parts of the Pentateuch; and as having no more authority than the civil and ceremonial law of the Israelites; unless where this authority is discernible in the nature of the commands themselves. As this opinion appears not only erroneous, but dangerous, I shall

oppose it with the following reasons:—

1. The law of the Israelites, both civil and ceremonial, is distinguished from the decalogue in this great particular: *that* was written by Moses in a book; *this* was first spoken by the voice of God, and then twice written by his finger on tables of stone, amid all the awful splendours of mount Sinai.

2. Moses, after reciting the decalogue in Deut. v immediately subjoins these words; ‘The Lord spake unto all your assembly in the mount, out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and the thick darkness, with a great voice: and he added no more. And he wrote them on two tables of stone, and delivered them unto me. And it came to pass, when ye heard the voice out of the midst of the darkness (for the mountain did burn with fire), that ye came near unto me, even all the heads of your tribes, and your elders; and ye said, Behold, the Lord our God hath shewed us his glory, and his greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire. We have seen this day, that God doth talk with man, and he liveth. Now, therefore, why should we die? for this great fire will consume us. If we hear the voice of the Lord our God any more, we shall die. For who is there of all flesh, that hath heard the voice of the living God, speaking out of the midst of the fire, and hath lived?’

To this petition God consented, and promised to deliver his remaining precepts to Moses, and through him to Israel. Why was this distinction made? Why was the decalogue spoken by the voice, and written by the finger of God? and why, in the emphatical language of Moses, did he ‘add no more?’ The only reason which can be alleged, is the transcendent dignity and importance of these commands. The view which Moses himself had of the total distinction between the decalogue, and the rest of the law written by him, is evident from this fact, that he commanded the Israelites to write them plainly, after they had passed over Jordan, upon great stones plastered with plaster, and set up by the congrega-

tion near the altar which they were directed to build.* Why were they thus distinguished here?

(3.) Christ has distinguished them in a similar manner. When the young ruler came to Christ, and asked, 'What good thing he should do, that he might have eternal life?' Christ said to him, 'Thou knowest the commandments.' The young man asked, 'Which?' Christ, in reply, repeated five of the commandments in the second table, and the summary which contains them all. This shews beyond a doubt, that 'the commandments' was a name appropriated to the decalogue, and denoted the same superiority to all other commands, as the name, The Bible, or The Book, denotes with respect to all other books.

Again: Christ, in answer to the scribe, who asked him, 'Which is the first and great commandment?' recites the two great commands which Moses had made the sum of the decalogue; and adds, 'On these two commands hang all the law and the prophets.' In other words, 'On these two commands is suspended the whole volume of the Old Testament.' What can be a stronger testimony of the superiority of the decalogue to every other part of that volume?

(4.) St. Paul, Rom. xiii. 9, says, 'For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying; namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' Here the apostle, after reciting five of the commands contained in the second table of the decalogue, adds, 'If there be any other commandment.' Is not this direct proof, that he regarded the decalogue as containing all those which were, by way of eminence, 'the commandments of God, and as separated by a broad line of distinction from every other precept?

* See Kennicott's Dissertations,

Fifthly : It is well known that the Jews always considered the decalogue as entirely separated from every other part of the Old Testament. The prophets who succeeded Moses did nothing, as moral teachers, but explain and enforce it. Christ declared, that ' sooner shall heaven and earth pass away, than one jot or one tittle of this law shall pass, until all be fulfilled.' The apostles have enforced no other precepts as obligatory upon Christians. The Jews have at this day these commands written out in large letters, and hung up in their synagogues, as solemn monitors to all who enter them of their duty. In a manner correspondent with this have they ever been regarded by Christians. They are at this day proverbially known by the name of the *Ten Commandments*, and the *Moral Law*.

St. Paul, in a passage which ought not to be omitted on this occasion, Eph. vi. 1—3, reciting the fifth command, says, ' This is the first commandment with promise.' But God had given to Noah, to Abraham, to Jacob, to Moses, and to the Israelites, many commands, and annexed to them many promises, before the law was delivered from mount Sinai. In what sense, then, was the fifth command the first to which a *promise* was annexed? Plainly, in this sense only, that it is the first in the decalogue which has this mark of distinction. In the eye of St. Paul, therefore, the decalogue contained all those which he thought proper to call *the commandments* and was, in his view, of a character totally distinct, and totally superior, to every other part of the Old Testament.

As the apostle recites this command to the Ephesians, who were Gentiles, as obligatory on them no less than on the Jews ; it is clear that the whole decalogue, unless some part of it has been plainly disannulled, is entirely obligatory on Christians. Had there been any distinction in this respect between the different precepts of this law, St. Paul must, it would seem, have made it on this occasion. He would, at least, have made it somewhere ; and not

have left so important a subject without a single note of illustration.

IV. Dr. Paley says, that “St. Paul evidently appears to consider the sabbath as a part of the Jewish ritual, and not binding upon Christians, as such ‘Let no man, therefore, judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath-days; which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ.’ Col. ii. 16, 17.”

To this observation I answer, first, that this passage refers not in any sense to the sabbath, but merely to the ordinary holidays of the Jews. The burden of proving the contrary lies upon the disciples of Dr. Paley.

Secondly; If this be denied, I assert that it refers to the seventh day only, and not at all to the Christian sabbath. Until the contrary is proved, I shall consider this answer as sufficient; especially as the Christian sabbath is not in the Scriptures, and was not by the primitive church, called *the sabbath*; but ‘the first day of the week,’ and ‘the Lord’s day.’

V. The same writer says, that ‘the observation of the sabbath was not one of the articles enjoined by the apostles, in Acts xv. upon the Christian Gentiles.’

I answer, Neither was abstinence from theft, murder, lying, coveting, profaneness, or idolatry.

VI. Dr. Paley asserts, that ‘the observation of the sabbath is not expressly enjoined in the New Testament.’

To this I answer, first, that the text is in my own view an explicit injunction of this duty. But as this opinion has been contested; as the paragraph in which it is contained is confessedly obscure; as it would require one whole discourse of this nature to consider it sufficiently; and as the text was written many years after the Christian sabbath was effectually established; I observe,

Secondly; That the Christian sabbath was originally introduced into the church much more success-

fully and happily than it could have been done by an express injunction.

In order to judge of this subject, it is necessary to bring up to our view the situation of those to whom the gospel was first preached. These were all Jews; intensely bigoted to every part of their religion, and peculiarly to their sabbath. The day had been appointed by God himself; and was acknowledged to be divinely appointed by Christ and his apostles. The experiment of interfering with the feelings of the Jews concerning the sabbath, even in the most lawful manner, had been sufficiently tried by Christ to discourage the apostles from every unnecessary attempt of this nature. Accordingly, the apostles pursued a peaceful and unobjectionable method. They celebrated at times, and probably always, the Jewish sabbath, when they were among Jews. The Jews at the same time, without any objection, yielded to their example and authority in celebrating the Christian worship on the day of Christ's resurrection. They were circumcised; but they were also willingly baptized. They celebrated the passover; but willingly added to it the Lord's supper. They prayed in the temple; but they willingly united, also, in the prayers and praises of Christian assemblies holden in private houses, or in the fields. While the Jewish service was neither attacked nor neglected, they made not the least objection to that of the Christian church. In this manner, all these ordinances grew into use, veneration, and habit; and, in the end, gained such a possession of the mind, and such a strength of authority, as could neither be overthrown nor weakened.

When the apostles came to declare in form, that the Jewish worship was to cease; the minds of the church were so well prepared to receive this declaration, that it was carried into a general execution. Difficulties and divisions arose, indeed, about this subject in several churches, particularly about circumcision, and produced a course of serious contention. What would have been the case, had this part

cVII.] OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

of the system been begun at an earlier period?

About the Christian sabbath, no dispute appears to have existed during the three first centuries. All the churches appear to have adopted it, and to have neglected the Jewish sabbath, without any difficulty. Was not this method of introducing so important a change dictated by true wisdom, and a better method than any other?

The example of the apostles is an example to all Christians. Were we then to give up the point contested in the objection, we have still such a law in this example; and so efficacious, that probably no doctrine has been more generally received than that of the Christian sabbath, and no duty more generally performed than the observation of it, down to the present time.

The absolute necessity of establishing the doctrines and duties of Christianity among the Jews, in the infancy of the church, has been shewn in a former Discourse. I shall only add, that it seems impossible to have introduced among that people the Christian sabbath in any other manner than that which was adopted by the apostles, unless their whole character had been miraculously changed.

SERMON CVIII.

THE LAW OF GOD. THE DECALOGUE.

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT.

THE MANNER IN WHICH THE SABBATH IS TO BE
OBSERVED.

—

If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable, and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words; then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.—ISA. lviii. 13, 14.

IN the first of the Discourses which I have delivered concerning the fourth command, I proposed,

I. *To consider the perpetual establishment of the sabbath; and,*

II. *The manner in which it is to be observed.*

The former of these doctrines, together with the objections against it, has been made the subject of the three preceding Sermons. The latter shall be the theme of the present Discourse.

The text is the most minute and perfect summary of the duties incumbent on mankind with respect to this holy day, which is contained in the Scriptures. It is a prediction to the Jews, announcing that if they will perform these duties, God will greatly prosper them with spiritual and temporal blessings, in the land of their fathers. In my own opinion, it especially respects a period yet to come. In examining this subject, I shall endeavour,

I. *To point out the nature and extent of these duties.*

II. *To shew that they are binding on us.*

L I shall endeavour to point out the nature and extent of these duties.

In examining this subject, I shall adopt the scheme of the text ; and mention,

1. *The things from which we are to abstain.*

2. *The things which we are to perform.*

(1.) *We are bound to abstain from sin, in thought, conversation, and conduct.*

All who read the gospel know, or may know perfectly, that sin may be as easily and as extensively committed in thought, as in word or action ; and that the real seat of sin is in the *heart*. With the reformation of our hearts then we are always to begin our duty. We may as easily and grossly profane the sabbath, so far as ourselves only are concerned, by thoughts which are unsuited to its nature, as we can by any actions whatever. If our minds are intent on our business, or our pleasures, if our affections wander after them, if we are cold or lukewarm with respect to our religious duties, if we are negligent of a serious and cordial attention to them, if we regard with impatience the interruption occasioned to our secular concerns, if we wish the institution had not been appointed, or the time in which it is to be kept lessened ; then, plainly, we do not esteem ‘the sabbath a delight,’ nor abstain from ‘finding our own pleasure.’ So long as this is the state of our thoughts, all our outward conformity to this precept (for such is really the nature of the text) will be merely hypocritical. Every oblation from such a mind will be vain ; and all its ‘incense an abomination.’—‘The sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies,’ among persons, who act in this manner, will be such as God ‘cannot away with ;’ and their ‘solemn meeting will be iniquity.’

The heart gives birth to all the movements of the tongue. We profane the sabbath, whenever we employ the ‘time in worldly conversation. Such conversation is in the text denoted by the phrase, ‘speaking thine own words:’—‘thine own’ being supplied by the translators. I think this supplement ra

tional ; since, in the two preceding clauses, we find 'doing thine own way,' and 'finding thine own pleasure.' Bishop Lowth, from similar phraseology in the ninth verse, supposes it should be 'vain words.' The meaning, however, will differ immaterially.

Such conversation is, like our thoughts, directed indifferently to subjects of business, and of pleasure; and in both cases the sabbath is subverted, and, so far as this conversation extends, is changed from a holy into a secular day. God is robbed of his rights, and of his service ; and we are prevented from attaining, and from a disposition to attain, the holiness which is indispensable to salvation.

There is no way in which the sabbath is more easily, more insensibly, more frequently, and more fatally violated, than this. Temptations to it are always at hand. The transgression always seems a small one, usually a dubious one at the worst, and often no transgression at all. Multitudes of persons, of sober and well meaning dispositions nay, multitudes, as there is but too much reason to fear, of professing Christians, beginning with religious subjects, slide imperceptibly towards those which are considered as moral in such a degree as scarcely to differ from religious ones ; thence to secular themes, bordering upon these ; and thence to mere matters of business or amusement. Such persons, before they are aware, find themselves occupied in conversing about the affairs of the neighbourhood—the strangers who are at church—the new dresses—fashions—business—diversions—news—and politics. To these they are led by mere *worldly* conversation concerning the prayers, the psalmody, or the sermon ; as having been well or ill devised, written, spoken, or performed ; by a history, merely secular, of the sickness and deaths in the neighbourhood, or elsewhere ; or of the dangerous or fatal accidents which have lately happened ; the state of the weather—the season—the crops—the prospects—the affairs of the family—and by innumerable other

things of a similar nature. The next step is, ordinarily, an habitual employment of this holy day in open, cool, and self-satisfied conversation about business, schemes of worldly pursuits, bargains, gains, and losses. It is not to be understood, that Christians go all these lengths. It is my real belief, however, that they go much farther than they can justify; and fail, in this manner, of their duty, their improvement in the Christian life, their proper exemplariness of character, the evidence of their piety which would spring from these sources, the hope which it would inspire, the peace which would accompany them, and the joy in which they would delightfully terminate. Many sober men, however, who but for this very conduct might probably become Christians, go all these lengths; and thus lose insensibly their tenderness of conscience, their soberness of mind, and their desire, as well as their hope, of eternal life. Men less well-principled start originally at the *end* of this career, and thus annihilate the sabbath at once; bidding, without anxiety, a final adieu to the sabbath itself, and to its rich, exalted, and immortal blessings.

The profanation of the sabbath by *actions* is seen and acknowledged by all decent men, who acknowledge it as a day consecrated by God to himself. Actions are so open to the view of mankind, are so definite a proof of the disposition, and, when violations of a known rule of duty, constitute so gross a proof of impiety, that all doubts concerning the true construction to be given of them vanish whenever they appear. The common and favourite modes of profaning the sabbath in this way are spending our time in dress, in ministering to a luxurious appetite, in walking or riding for amusement, in writing letters of friendship, in visiting, and in reading books which are not of a religious, but merely of a decent character, and ultimately those which are formed to be the means of amusement and sport. The end of this progress, generally esteemed more gross, though perhaps in many instances not more, and in others less

sinful, is the devotion of this sacred day to downright business. Persons who go this length occupy the time in writing letters of business, posting their accounts, visiting post-offices, making bargains, transmitting money to their correspondents, going or sending to markets, making journeys, at first with, and afterward without pretences of necessity; and, ultimately, labouring openly in the ordinary employments of life. This is what is called in the text 'doing our own ways.' A man's *way*, in scriptural language, is the customary course of his life.

All these things, whether existing in thought, word, or action, are called *our own*, in contradistinction to those which are *God's*: that is, to those which are required of us by God, and every one of them is prohibited in the text.

(2.) *We are required to abstain from idleness.*

Although the sabbath is never to be spent in secular business, or amusement, it is still to be, invariably, a day of industrious exertion. There are some persons who feel too much regard to the dictates of their consciences, to public opinion, to the commands of God, or to all of them, to consume the sabbath in business or amusement; still, having no relish for the duties of the day, they spend it in idleness, satisfied with abstaining from those which they esteem the grosser and more direct violations of this divine institution. Accordingly, they lounge about their houses, gardens, or farms, and waste the season of salvation in sloth, sleep, or such a course of existence as resembles that of the oyster; a state bordering upon the line which separates animated beings from those which are inanimate. This course of conduct is an annihilation of the sabbath, the death of the day, and a frustration of all the designs and blessings of God connected with this heavenly institution. The sabbath was intended to be the means of honouring God, and of saving the souls of men. But idleness is always dishonourable to God, and hostile to the salvation of the soul. Both of these great objects are accomplished by him only,

who is 'not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.'

(3.) *We are bound to abstain, with peculiar caution, from acknowledged sins upon this holy day.*

The abstinence which I have hitherto specified regards business and amusement, ordinarily lawful on other days. From that conduct, and those thoughts which are *universally* sinful, we are bound to abstain, with peculiar care, upon the sabbath; because then they are peculiarly heinous. The sacred nature of this day, and the solemn consecration of it by God to himself, together with all the advantages which we enjoy for religious instruction, and for all the duties of piety, furnish such a body of motives to our abstinence from sin, as cannot be resisted without peculiar guilt. Every sin committed upon this day is aggravated by the fact, that we have resisted these motives. At the same time, we are, by its very nature, so withdrawn from the world, so secured against temptation, and so much at leisure for solemn meditation, and for the establishment of firm resolutions of obedience in our minds, that, if we sin upon this day, we sin with fewer inducements to the iniquity than upon other occasions. He who indulges his wickedness on the sabbath, will be in danger of rioting in it on the other days of the week.

It hardly needs to be remarked, that sinful ways are peculiarly *our own*, and eminently opposed to those which are required by God.

In all the above-recited particulars, those who are guilty of them openly violate the law of God, squander the accepted time, waste and abuse the means of grace, and lessen, sabbath by sabbath, their hopes of eternal life.

The duties which we are to perform are, generally, all the various offices of religion. Good men in ancient times entered on the sabbath-day into the house of the Lord with praise and prayer. The law, the psalms, and the prophets were 'read in the synagogues every sabbath-day.' They 'feared God in

the assembly of his saints ; they praised him for his mighty acts ; uttered abundantly the memory of his great goodness ; and sung of his righteousness. They went on from strength to strength ; every one of them in Zion appeared before God.' They esteemed ' a day in his courts as better than a thousand. Their souls longed, yea, even fainted, for the courts of the Lord ; their heart and their flesh cried out for the living God.' Accordingly, ' the Lord God was to them a sun, and a shield. He gave them grace and glory ; and withheld from them no good thing.' In the same manner the early Christians '*esteemed the sabbath a delight, and the holy of the Lord, honourable.*' In the times of the apostles, ' they continued in fellowship, in prayer, and in breaking of bread.' They sung ' psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs.' They prophesied, taught the doctrines of the Scriptures, uttered and interpreted revelation, and collected alms for such saints as were in peculiar circumstances of distress. All these examples abundantly shew us, that good men during the ages of inspiration steadily accorded, and thought it their duty to accord, with the requisitions contained in the text. What was *their* duty is *ours*. All these solemn services therefore, and others connected with them, it is incumbent on us to perform ' in spirit and in truth.' We are to ' join ourselves to the Lord, to serve him,' according to the prediction of Isaiah concerning us, and the other Gentiles ; ' to love the name of the Lord ; to keep the sabbath from polluting it ; and to take hold of his covenant.' Particularly,

(1.) *We are to perform all the duties of public worship.*

The sabbath, as has been observed, was originally appointed for the commemoration of the divine glory, manifested in creating the world ; and for the attainment and improvement of holiness in man. The manner in which we should commemorate the glory of God in the work of creation, on this day, is sufficiently taught us by the manner in which the

first sabbath was celebrated. Then, we are informed, 'the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.' In the same manner was the work of the new creation, and the divine glory displayed in it, celebrated by the same illustrious beings, according to the prophetic account given in the sixty-eighth psalm of this wonderful event—an account expressly applied to it by the apostle Paul in the third chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians. 'The chariots of God are twenty thousand; even thousands of angels. The Lord is among them, as in Sinai; as in the holy place.' The very hymn which they sung seems to be transmitted to us in the following words, 'Thou hast ascended on high; thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also; that the Lord God might dwell among them.'

The manner in which holiness and salvation are to be obtained is every where taught in the gospel. The truth of God in the hands of the divine Spirit, is the great instrument by which we are 'made free from the bondage of corruption.' 'Faith,' we know, 'cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.' This word is therefore to be faithfully explained and enforced by the preacher, and faithfully received by those who hear him. The prayers and the praises of every religious assembly are to spring from the heart, and are to ascend up before the throne of infinite mercy with dependance, with confidence, with love, with reverence, with gratitude, with hope, and with joy. Our prayers and our praises are also to be presented in the name of Christ, as the great and glorious 'propitiation for the sins of men,' and the 'true and living way of access to God.' They are to be presented with faith in his name; that faith which occupies the whole heart, and alone interests us in the blessings of redemption.

Christians, at the same time, are to unite in the administration and celebration of the evangelical ordinances, baptism and the Lord's supper; and are

thus in a peculiar and most affecting manner to commemorate the glory of Christ, manifested in the wonderful work of the new creation.

All these things are to be done 'decently, and in order.' At the same time, they are to be performed with plainness, simplicity, and no unnecessary rites. The Jewish worship was intended by its ceremonious magnificence to strike the imagination, during the early and ignorant periods of society. To this end it was perfectly fitted. All its services were calculated to affect the senses in the deepest manner, and to find through them access to the heart. The gospel, on the contrary, is addressed directly to the understanding; and makes its way to the heart by means of the power of conscience. Unnecessary rites are here both useless and noxious; since they allure the thoughts away from the doctrines and precepts which are inculcated, to the ceremonies by which they are surrounded. In this manner, the spiritual worship of the gospel is ever in danger of becoming a mere 'bodily exercise,' unprofitable in itself, and destructive of piety. The ceremonies of the Romish church exterminated its devotion, and became extensively the cause as well as the effect of that corruption, which by men of real religion has been justly regarded as a prodigy.

(2.) *On this holy day, also, we are bound to perform the various private duties of religion.*

The worship of the family, and that of the closet, are the duty of all families, and of all individuals, every day they live. Equally is it the duty of all men to spend a part of every day in self-examination, in religious meditation, and in contemplation on the perfections and works of God, on the character of Christ and the wonders of redemption. The Scriptures especially, and other religious books generally, are to be read, pondered, and cordially received. The amendment of the soul, and victory over sin and temptation, are to be planned, resolved on, and achieved. We are to humble ourselves before God, to devote ourselves anew to his service to,

cherish the duties of religion, and universally to cultivate the Christian character.

At the same time, children and servants are to be carefully instructed in the great and plain doctrines and duties of religion, to be restrained, in the same manner as ourselves, from all worldly pursuits, and to be presented by us with such persuasive examples of piety, as may engage them to reverence and embrace the gospel.

Universally, our time, our thoughts, our conversation, and our actions are all to be devoted to God. This, indeed, is in a sense true of every day. But on other days it is our duty to labour in our worldly business; and, while our thoughts are engaged by pursuits of this nature, it is impossible that they should be also engaged by religious subjects, with sufficient intensesness and constancy to fulfil all the demands, either of our interest, or of our duty. On the sabbath we are withdrawn from all worldly pursuits. A solemn pause is made in the business of life. A happy season of leisure is furnished to us for obtaining our salvation. Then no worldly business is to intrude, no worldly pleasure to solicit, no worldly thought to interfere. The holy nature of the day, and the peculiarly solemn nature of its services, conspire with eminent felicity to render all the duties which have been specified easy, undisturbed, solemn, impressive, and profitable. This then is to be carefully seized, and anxiously husbanded, as a golden opportunity for performing them all.

(3.) *The sabbath is to be employed, so far as circumstances demand, in performing works of necessity and mercy.*

Our authority for this assertion is complete in the declaration of God, 'I will have mercy and not sacrifice.' In the illustrations of this precept by our Saviour, and in his example, it is equally complete. What these works are, beyond the direct import of this example, we are to judge as carefully and conscientiously as we can. Generally, it is to be observed, that as little of our time as the nature of the

case demands is to be employed in these works, and the remainder to be devoted to those duties of religion, which were the original objects of the sabbath. Wherever the time required is so great as to be disproportioned to the value of the necessity in question, it is to be given up. That necessary work which requires but a moment, may be lawful, when it would become unlawful if it required an hour. All works, both of necessity and mercy, are to be regarded as duties which we are bound to perform, and never as indulgences, which we are permitted to take.

The time at which the peculiar duties of the sabbath are to commence, is in my opinion the time when darkness commences on the evening of Saturday. For this opinion the following reasons may be alleged:—

First, *The natural day commenced with darkness.* After God had created the chaos, darkness rested upon it for a certain period. This darkness, and the light which succeeded it, are declared to have constituted ‘the first day.’ In the same manner are reckoned the five succeeding days of the creation.

Secondly, *The sabbath, at its original institution, was a natural day.* This is clear, because we are told, that God rested the seventh day; and, from the manner in which the six preceding days were reckoned, we have the fullest proof, that he who by his own choice reckoned *them* in this manner, reckoned *he seventh day* in the same manner.

Thirdly, *When the sabbath was renewedly enjoined upon the Israelites, it was required to be kept as a natural day.* This we know, because no alteration of the original institution is specified in the fourth command; and because, in Lev. xxiii. 32, God says to that people concerning the great day of atonement, ‘From even unto even shall ye celebrate your sabbath.’

Fourthly, *The Jewish sabbath commenced with the darkness; or with the time which we denote by the word, candle-lighting.* This is evident from Nehem. xiii. 19, ‘And it came to pass, that when the gates of Je-

Jerusalem began to be dark before the sabbath,' &c. It is here evident, that the sabbath had not commenced on Friday evening, when the gates of Jerusalem '*began to be dark*;' or, in our customary language, when *the dusk of the evening* commenced in that city. The sabbath also, as a *natural* day, began originally at the same time; the first day of the creation having commenced with absolute darkness. The time of darkness to us is the time when we can no longer see, so as to transact business by the light of the sun.

Fifthly, *The Christian sabbath is the first day of the week, and a natural day; because there is no hint given us, in the New Testament, of any alteration made, or to be made, in this respect.* Dr. Macknight informs us, that the ancient Christians began their sabbath on the evening of Saturday. Some Christians have supposed, that the time when our Lord arose from the dead, is that at which the present sabbath ought to be begun. This is evidently an error; because that time is *not declared* in the New Testament, and therefore cannot be known by us. Accordingly, these Christians begin the sabbath at *midnight*; a time of human appointment merely. This seems to me unwarrantable.

II. *I shall now attempt to shew, that the duties of the sabbath are all binding upon us.*

On this subject I observe,

1. That *the example of God*, in resting from his work of creation, and of Christ, in resting from the work of redemption, is authoritatively binding upon us; and requires us to rest from our own lawful labours in a similar manner.

2. The *fourth command*, which has, I trust, been shewn to be *equally obligatory on all men*, requires the same rest from us, which it required from the Israelites.

3. The *original institution*, the *examples of God the Father*, and the Son, and the *injunctions of the fourth command*, require in substance all these duties. The duties which they expressly require cannot be per-

formed to any valuable purpose, unless all the duties specified in this Discourse are also performed. The true meaning and real extent of these examples and injunctions, as they respected the Jews, are explained in the comments of the prophets, particularly of the prophet Isaiah, concerning this subject. The text is the most copious and definite exhibition of this nature contained in the Scriptures. In chapter lvi. of the same prophet, is found also a comprehensive account of the same duties ; and we have several other, less particular and less impressive explanations in other passages of the Scriptures. These injunctions and examples then demanded, in the view of the Spirit of inspiration, all these duties of the Israelites. Of course, this was the true tenor of these examples and injunctions. But, if I mistake not, I have proved both to be no less obligatory on Christians, than on the Israelites. The same examples and injunctions have therefore the same tenor with respect to us, and bind us to exactly the same duties.

4. *The New Testament has nowhere dispensed with any part of these duties.*

It has been often thought, that Christ has released his followers from some part of the duties of the sabbath, and in some degree from that strictness in observing it, which were originally required of the Jews. Observations to this amount I have not unfrequently seen and heard ; but, exclusively of the things observed by Dr. Paley and mentioned in the last Discourse, I have never been informed of the particulars from which Christians are thus supposed to have been released ; nor do I know in what passages of the New Testament they are supposed to be contained. Dr. Paley believes that the sabbath was never at all obligatory on Christians. According to this scheme, therefore, it was impossible for Christ to release them from these duties ; because they were never incumbent on them. Where those who make this supposition find their warrant for it, in the discourses of Christ, or of his apostles, I confess myself

unable to determine. The observations which our Saviour makes, as an exposition of several parts of the decalogue, in his sermon on the mount, he prefaces with these remarkable declarations; 'Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil: for verily, I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in nowise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.' After these declarations, it is impossible that Christ should be rationally believed to have altered at all the duties of the sabbath, much less to have annihilated it, unless he has done it somewhere in plain, unequivocal language. But no such language on this subject can be found in the New Testament. Until something of this nature shall be definitely pointed out, the duties of the sabbath must be acknowledged to have been left by Christ and his apostles exactly as they found them; and all declarations to the contrary must be regarded as merely gratuitous and presumptive.

5. As the religious privileges of Christians are declared to be superior to those of the Jews, they cannot be supposed to be lessened with respect to the sabbath, unless this fact is directly asserted.

If the duties of Christians on the sabbath are lessened, either in number or degree, then their religious privileges are rendered just so far inferior to those of the Jews. The duties of the sabbath are all privileges of a high and glorious nature, and cannot fail to be accounted such by every good man. I speak not here of the regulations of the civil laws of the Jews; these have nothing to do with the subject of the present discussion. I speak of the sabbath, as instituted on the seventh day; as instituted immediately after the creation was finished; as enjoined anew in the fourth command of the decalogue; and as explained and enforced by the prophets, particularly by Isaiah. It was a high religious privilege to a Jew to have one whole day in seven divinely consecrated to the duties of religion; to be required to 'esteem the sabbath a delight, and the

holy of the Lord honourable ; and to turn away his foot from finding his own pleasure' on that sacred day. It was a combination of glorious privileges to a Jew, 'to keep the sabbath from polluting it—to join himself on that day to the Lord ; to be his servant—to take hold of his covenant—to be brought to the holy mountain of God—to be made joyful in his house of prayer—to delight himself in the Lord,' and to find his various solemn services accepted by his Creator. But if these duties, or any of them, be lessened in number or degree, just so far are the privileges of a Christian inferior to those of a Jew. Which of these privileges would a Christian be willing to give up ? Which of them does the gospel require him to relinquish ?

I shall conclude this Discourse with a summary enumeration of *several motives*, which strongly solicit our exact observance of the sabbath.

1. *Such an observance of the sabbath is required by the command of God.*

2. *It is enforced by the divine example.*

God rested on the seventh day, the day after the creation was ended. Christ rested on the first day, the day after the new creation was finished. This twofold example of Jehovah is of infinite authority ; and enjoins, in the most expressive language, the faithful imitation of all mankind.

3. *The nature of the duties enjoined upon the sabbath, demands of us such an observance.*

The duties of the sabbath are all of a religious and holy nature. Such duties can never be successfully or profitably performed, when mingled with secular business or amusements. These will both distract the attention of the mind, and withdraw it from that clear, strong, affecting sense of spiritual and divine objects in which the peculiar benefit of the sabbath is found. The soul, in this case, will be divided between God and mammon, between the love of the world and the love of God. The consequence cannot but be foreseen. The world will predominate ; God will be forgotten ; and dishonoured, if not for

gotten · the soul will cease from a heavenly character, debase its pure and exalted affections, lose those refined and noble views of celestial objects, which are fitted both to inspire and to cherish devotion cease to stretch its wings towards heaven, and fall down to earth, loaded with a burden of gross cares and dragged to the ground by an encumbering mass of sensual gratification.

At the same time, it is *far easier* to observe the sabbath *wholly*, than to observe it *in part*. He who intends to divide it between earthly and spiritual pursuits, will never know where to draw the line of division. Perpetually will he find himself wandering, now towards religion, and now towards the world; while his conscience will be unceasingly embarrassed by fears that he has neglected his duty, and by doubts concerning what it is. There is no such thing as a *half-way* performance of our duty. If such a performance had in fact been required, or allowed, we should have been distressed by unceasing perplexity. Happy is it for us, that an ordinance of this nature cannot be found in the Scriptures.

4. *The blessing of the sabbath is promised to such an observance.* The text is an illustrious proof of this. ‘If thou do all the things,’ says God, required in the first verse; ‘then shalt thou delight thyself in Jehovah; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth.’ Not if thou do *a part* of these things. There is no promise to a divided service; there is no blessing connected with it. He, therefore, who wishes for the blessing of God upon his religious labours, must look for it only in the strict and faithful observance of the duties which he has required.

5. *It is demanded by our own highest interest.*

The sabbath is eminently ‘the day of salvation. ‘On Zion the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.’ On that holy day, and in the holy place, this incomprehensible blessing is still to be found. Where that day is not observed, and that place is not frequented, this blessing ceases to descend. If we love ourselves, then; if we love our

families ; if we love our country ; if we love mankind ; we shall exert ourselves to the utmost to uphold the sabbath in its purity, in our hearts, in our conversation, and in our conduct. We shall ‘ keep the sabbath from polluting it ;’ shall observe it with the most faithful exactness ; and, by precept and example, solemnly recommend it to the exact observance of others.

SERMON CIX.

THE LAW OF GOD. THE DECALOGUE.

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT.

REFLECTIONS ON THE SABBATH.

Wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath-day.

EXOD. xx. 11.

IN the four preceding Discourses I have considered the perpetual establishment of the sabbath, and the manner in which it is to be observed ; and have endeavoured to answer such objections as occurred to me, against the doctrines which I have felt myself bound to maintain concerning these subjects. I shall now close my observations on the sabbath, with some of those reflections which this very solemn and interesting subject naturally suggests to a serious mind.

The first consideration which strikes such a mind when contemplating the sabbath, is *the pre-eminent wisdom of this divine institution.*

Wisdom, as applied to conduct, denotes the choice of desirable ends, and the selection of happy means for their accomplishment. The ends aimed at in the institution of the sabbath are numerous, and all of them eminently desirable. The means by which they are accomplished are, at the same time, eminently happy. The sabbath, and the things immediately connected with it, are the amount of them all.

Among these ends let me remark, since God himself has been pleased to mention it, and to mention it in the fourth command of the decalogue; the provision which this holy day furnishes of a season of rest to labouring animals.

‘A righteous man regards the life of his *beast*,’ says the wisest of all men, Prov. x. 12. In this fact we behold a strong resemblance of a righteous man to his Creator. The goodness of this glorious Being is forcibly displayed in the provision which he has made for the rest and comfort of labouring animals in the moral law. In the hands even of prudent and humane masters, it is clearly seen, that such animals are sufficiently employed when they labour six days of the week, and are released to rest and refreshment on the seventh. God, who perfectly knew what their strength was able to bear, and who perfectly foresaw how greatly they would be oppressed by avarice and cruelty, was pleased, in this solemn manner, and at this early period, to provide for their relief, by securing to them the quiet and restoration of one day in seven. In this merciful provision the divine tenderness is displayed in a most amiable and edifying manner. The humble character of even these beings did not place them below the compassionate care of God. Elsewhere he has commanded us to supply them with food: here he has commanded us to furnish them with rest. In both cases he has taught us, that ‘the Lord is good’ and kind ‘to all;’ and that ‘his tender mercies are over all the works of his hands.’ This indulgence to animals is enjoined with infinite authority; and secured by the same sanction which enforces justice and beneficence towards mankind. By bringing up this subject also in form, thus solemnly, regularly, and often, he has formed our regard towards these creatures into a habit; and prevented us from the possibility of being inattentive to this duty.

In the same manner are *rest and refreshment secured to mankind*. Children and servants particularly are by this institution preserved from the oppression of

severe masters, and the unfeeling demands of unnatural parents. Every industrious man will tell you, from his own experience, that the season of labour is sufficiently long, and this return of rest absolutely necessary for the preservation of health, and strength, and life ; that greater toil would fatigue the bodily powers into decay ; and that the weekly cessation from business is not more frequent than our worldly interests clearly demand. Hence, unless when under the dominion of avarice, he will consider the sabbath as a benevolent provision for his true worldly interest. What will thus be approved by the man who labours voluntarily and for himself, cannot fail to be cordially welcomed by him who is compelled, through indigence, to toil for others ; the servant drudging for a hard master, and the child trembling under the rod of an unfeeling parent.

Nor is the *usefulness* of the sabbath less visible in the promotion of *neatness and cleantiness*, especially among the *inferior* classes of mankind. No person is willing to appear in a religious assembly, unless cleanly and decently dressed ; so true is this, that probably in all countries where the sabbath is observed, every one not prevented by absolute poverty, has what is proverbially called a *Sunday suit of clothes*. The spirit of cleanliness and decency awakened by the return of this holy day, is *always* thus awakened. Excited every week, it is of course excited through the week, becomes an immoveable habit, extends its influence through all the concerns of human life, and in the end constitutes the standing character. *Individuals* are thus prevented from becoming brutes in their appearance ; and a *nation* is fashioned into an entire and delightful contrast to the native dirt and slovenliness of man, always exhibited in so humiliating a manner by savages. The influence of this single fact on the conduct of human life cannot be calculated.

Inseparably connected with this article, is the *softness and civility of manners* to which the sabbath, more than any thing else, allures mankind. Every

thing pertaining to the sabbath generates, of course, this desirable conduct. The neatness of dress and the decency of appearance, just mentioned, strongly persuade to it. A person better dressed than in the ordinary manner, will regularly behave with more than ordinary decency, unless *habitually* thus dressed. The association in our thoughts between the dress and the manners (both of which are intended to make us appear with advantage) is instinctive, and inseparable. Every thing connected with the sabbath also inspires such views and affections as contribute to the manners in question. We are, of course, united to a respectable assembly; on a sacred day, in a sacred place, upon a most affecting occasion, and for ends the most solemn and important in the universe. We are immediately before God, and are employed in his worship; in confessing our sins, in seeking the forgiveness of them, and in labouring to obtain an interest in his favour. We cannot here fail to feel our needy, frail, guilty, dependant character; to see how little and insignificant we are; how unbecoming are pride, unkindness, and insolence; how becoming humility, modesty, condescension, and gentleness; how amiable, in the sight of God, is 'the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit;' and how necessary, for every purpose for which we have assembled, the establishment of these things in our hearts. From these considerations must spring, of course, in every man who is not void of all propensity to that which is good, both gentleness of mind, and sweetness of manners.

I have already glanced at the tendency of the sabbath to *abase our pride*, and to *remove our native ruggedness of disposition*. This part of the subject deserves a farther consideration. One of the chief deformities of character in the rich, the learned, and the great, is that haughtiness of mind which, on account of their peculiar advantages, they are ever ready to feel; and one of the chief causes of suffering to the poor, the ignorant, and the powerless, is that insolence of behaviour, which from this haughtiness they

are compelled to endure. But when the superior classes of mankind assemble in the house of God, they sink at once, even in their own eyes, if they open them, down to the same level with their fellow-worms. In the presence of him, 'before whom all nations are as nothing,' the glare of splendour, the pride of wealth, the self-sufficiency of learning, and the loftiness of power, are annihilated in a moment. Those who a little while before felt themselves to be rich, and wise, and great, find that they are poor, ignorant, little, guilty, odious to God, exposed to his wrath, and hopeless, except in the mere character of suppliants for mercy.

When a great man in the sanctuary looks around him on a mixed assembly of his equals and inferiors, he will be compelled often to feel, and secretly to confess, that his poor neighbour, whom perhaps he would have 'disdained,' on other occasions, 'to set with the dogs of his flock,' is, in all probability, more excellent, more wise, more lovely, and in every sense greater, 'in the sight of the Highest,' than himself. Nothing can humble pride more than the elevation above itself of those whom it despises. This elevation of the humble, this useful depression of the naughty, is nowhere more perfect than in the house of God.

Here, as will be realized from what has been already said, the poor and lowly rise, of course, above their usual level. 'The rich and the poor,' says Solomon, 'meet together; the Lord is the maker of them all.' In the house of God they 'meet together,' in a manner wholly peculiar, are placed exactly on the same level, and are more strongly than any where else reminded that 'the Lord is the maker of them all.' Here they assemble as creatures of the same God merely. Here all their earthly distinctions vanish; and a new distinction, formed only of sin and holiness, commences which, unless terminated in the present world, will endure and widen for ever. Here then the poor man rises to his proper independence and distinction,

forgets the depression of his circumstances; and, without the aid of pride, assumes an elevation of character not less necessary to him for the faithful discharge of his duty, than the humility of the gospel to the lofty-minded. Thus the sabbath, like its Author, 'putteth down the mighty from their seats,' and 'exalteth them of low degree.' How perfect in this important particular is an institution, which produces these opposite and indispensable benefits in those whose situation so plainly and loudly demands them!

Another immense benefit of the sabbath is *the instruction, which it furnishes in morals and religion.*

The value of knowledge is admitted by all civilized men. It will usually, and ought ever to be admitted also, that moral and religious knowledge is of far more value than any other. It is more necessary, more practical, more useful, more enlarging to the mind, more refined, and more exalted. The least acquaintance with the subject will place this assertion beyond a doubt.

As the knowledge itself is more valuable, so the sabbath furnishes means for obtaining it, which are far cheaper, and far more efficacious, than were ever furnished by any other institution. Here, on a day devoted to no employment but the gaining of this knowledge, and the performance of those religious duties which unite with it in perfect harmony; in a place convenient and sacred; on an occasion infinitely important; and with the strong power of sympathy to aid and impress; a thousand persons are taught the best of all knowledge; the most useful to themselves, and the most beneficial to mankind; for a less sum than must be expended by a twentieth part of their number, in order to obtain the same instruction in any other science. No device of the heathen philosophers, or of modern infidels, greatly as they have boasted of their wisdom, can be compared, as to its usefulness, with this. The sabbath particularly is the *only mean ever devised*

of communicating important instruction to the great mass of mankind.

Here all may assemble, all may learn, from the prince to the beggar, from the man of gray hairs to the infant of days. Had the sabbath been a device of man, men would be able to boast of immensely greater ingenuity and wisdom than they have hitherto displayed; and would be justly pronounced to have formed a more successful and more patriotic institution for the benefit of mankind, than any which is found on the page of history. Here a real and glorious equality of privileges is established, not only without confusion and discord, but with strong enforcements of peace and good order. In these great blessings all are here alike interested, and all partake alike.

To the blessings of *peace and good order* universally, the sabbath contributes also in a pre-eminent degree. Moral and religious knowledge is the knowledge of our duty, and of the rewards which God will give to such as perform it. To this knowledge, the sabbath adds the highest motives to the performance which are found in the universe. All good, internal and external, in time and eternity, allures to it, as a direct and certain reward. All evil compels to it as a threatening, and deters from the omission as a punishment inevitable and endless. This knowledge, and these motives, the sabbath furnishes, with a solemnity and force altogether unrivalled. From the house of God they are carried with us into every concern of life, where duty is to be performed; and duty is to be performed in every concern. With the influence of the sabbath on his mind, man everywhere feels himself accountable to his Maker; and, in darkness and solitude, in the secrecy of thought, as well as in the conduct inspected by the public eye, realizes that the all-searching God is a constant witness of whatever he thinks, speaks, or does. From this consideration, more than from the dread of the dungeon and the halter, most men are inclined to restrain their hands from injustice and violence,

from tumult and confusion. In the mean time, the peace and good order of religious assemblies on the sabbath furnish the highest specimen of this happy conduct, that was ever seen in the present world. Fifty-two sabbaths every year is this conduct repeated. Hence, it becomes a powerful, as well as desirable, habit; and clings to him, who steadily visits the house of God, through the remainder of every week. In this manner, it is diffused through the life; and influences the thoughts, words, and actions, towards men of every class and character. The magistrate and the subject, the parent and the child, the master and the servant, the friend and the neighbour, are benefited by it alike. All of them acquire more peaceful dispositions, exhibit a more amiable deportment, pursue a more orderly conduct, and fill their respective stations with greater propriety than either would do under the influence of every other cause, except the immediate agency of God.

It will not be denied, that each of the things which I have specified, is an important benefit to mankind, nor that all of them united are of advantage inestimable. But the sabbath has blessings to give of a still higher nature. Among them this is one, of supreme moment; that *the sabbath is the great mean of preserving in the world the knowledge and the worship of the one living and true God.* Wherever the sabbath is not, there is no worship, no religion. Man forgets God, and God forsakes man. The moral world becomes a desert, where life never springs, and beauty never smiles. The beams of the Sun of righteousness never dawn upon the miserable waste; the rains of heaven never descend. Putrid with sin, and shrunk with ignorance, the soul of man loses its rational character; and prostrates itself before devils, men, beasts, and reptiles, in sects, stocks, and stones. To these man offers his prayers, his praises, and his victims; to these he sacrifices his children, and to these he immolates the purity and honour of his wife. A brutal worshipper

of a brutal god, he hopes for protection and blessing from the assumption of every folly, and the perpetration of every crime.

If his mind becomes enlightened by science, and these absurdities, as they sometimes may, become too gross and too naked to be received by him, he becomes an infidel, a sceptic, an atheist. The absurdity here is not indeed less, but greater. The only material difference is, that it is less palpable, less exposed to vulgar eyes, less susceptible of ridicule. The former is the madness of a blockhead, the latter, of a man of learning: that the folly of the clown, this of the man of fashion. In this case, the votary wanders through all the labyrinths of subtle disquisition; proves right to be wrong, and wrong to be right; and demonstrates that there is nothing either right or wrong. Freed from these encumbrances, men of this character cast their eyes towards the enjoyments of this world, and 'covet their neighbour's house, and their neighbour's wife, his man-servant, and his maid-servant; his ox, and his ass; and every thing that is their neighbour's.' Nothing, now, intervenes between themselves and the objects coveted, but the apprehension of resistance, and the dread of punishment. Elevate them to power, and the sabbath is changed into the *decade*, and the house of God into a stable; the Bible is paraded through the streets on an ass, and consumed upon a bonfire; immortal existence is blotted out of the divine kingdom; the Redeemer is postponed to a murderer; and the Creator to a prostitute, styled the Goddess of Reason. The end of this progress might be easily foreseen. Legalized plunder, legislative butchery, the prostitution of a kingdom, fields drenched in human blood, and cities burnt by human incendiaries, fill up the tremendous measure of iniquity, bewilder the gazing world with astonishment, awaken the shouts of fiends, and cover heaven itself with a robe of sackcloth.

But for the sabbath, this assembly had now been prostrate before the stock of a tree, or sitting round

the circle of a pawwaw; or, frantic with rage or frenzy, had been roaming the mountains in honour of Bacchus; or drowning with shouts and screams the cries of a human victim, offered up to appease the wrath of an imaginary deity.

But 'thanks be to God for this unspeakable gift!' The sabbath, 'according to his abundant mercy,' returns at the close of every week to shine upon us with its peaceful and benevolent beams. At the close of every week, with 'a still, small voice,' it summons us to the house of God. Here, we meet, and find, and know, and serve, our glorious and blessed Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. Here, on the mercy-seat, he sits enthroned, to hear our complaints and petitions, to receive our praises, to accept our repentance, and to forgive our sins, for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ. Here he makes known *his* pleasure and *our* duty. Here he promises to those who obey, divine and eternal rewards; and threatens those who disobey with terrible and never-ending punishments. Seen every week in these awful and amiable characters, God cannot be unknown nor forgotten. Accordingly, throughout the ages of Christianity, his presence and agency are understood every where, and by every person who frequents the house of God. The little child is as familiarly acquainted with them as the man of gray hairs; the peasant, as the monarch. 'All,' in this sense, 'know God, from the least to the greatest;' and there is 'no occasion for a man to say to his neighbour, Know the Lord.'

Intimately connected with this vast and interesting subject, and in an important sense the effect of the sabbath only, is *the attainment of holiness and salvation.*

Man, an apostate, guilty and condemned, infinitely needs a renovation of his character, a reversal of his sentence, an escape from his punishment, and a reinstatement in the glorious privileges from which he has fallen. To accomplish these inestimable and benevolent ends, God, according to the

language of the text, has *hallowed* and *blessed* the sabbath. Through every age, and through every land, where the sabbath has been kept holy unto the Lord, this blessing has regularly and uninterruptedly descended. There the glad tidings of salvation have been published and received. There men have sought and found Jehovah, their God, repented of their sins, believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, renewed their allegiance to their rightful Sovereign, obtained the pardon of their sins and the justification of their souls, triumphed over death and the grave, ascended to heaven, and begun the possession of everlasting joy. 'Wherever even two or three have met together in the name of Christ, there he has been in the midst of them, and blessed them,' with his peculiar blessing. This holy, heavenly season, has regularly opened the correspondence between this miserable world and the world of life and glory, and preserved the connexion between God and men. To it earth owes its chief blessings, and heaven no small part of its inhabitants, and of its unfading joys.

But where mankind have 'forsaken the assembling of themselves together, as the manner of some is,' all these blessings have ceased. 'The fruitful land has been converted into marshes, and miry places, which could not be healed, and were, therefore, given to salt.' In such places the world, and sin, and Satan, take entire possession of the heart, and leave no room for God. All the thoughts and desires are the offspring of 'the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.' Like Ahab, men 'sell themselves to work wickedness:' like Jeroboam, they sin, and make all around them to sin. There no prayers ascend to heaven, no voice of mercy is heard from that happy world, inviting sinners to faith and repentance in the Lord Jesus Christ. God is neither sought nor found. None ask for mercy, and none receive it. None knock at the door of life, and to none is it opened. All enter 'into the broad and crooked road,' and 'go down to the chambers of

death ;' while God with an awful voice proclaims concerning them, ' Ephraim is joined to idols : let him alone.'

Pause now for a moment, and recollect the number, the greatness, the glory, of these ends ; and tell me if the institution which unites and accomplishes them all in perfect harmony, is not supremely wise, and worthy of God. How easily does it accomplish them, how perfectly, how wonderfully ! How happy is the frequent, convenient, necessary return of this holy day ! After how desirable intervals, with what useful regularity, with what sweet serenity ! How necessary is it to the sinner, to call him off from the world, from stupidity, from sottishness ! How necessary to awaken his attention to God, to holiness, and to heaven ; to engage his thoughts on spiritual and divine objects, to begin his repentance, faith, and love, and to place his feet in the path which leads to immortal life ! How necessary to the saint, to rouse him from sloth, to recall him from sin ; to remind him of his duty, to increase his faith and holiness, and to help him forward in his journey towards heaven ! How necessary to Adam in his innocence ; how infinitely necessary to all his ruined offspring ! In a word, how plainly has the sabbath been *blessed*, as well as *hallowed* ! Blessed from the beginning to the present time, blessed in a multitude of particulars, blessed in every land where it has been known, with the immediate and peculiar favour of God, with the nearest resemblance to the blessings of immortality !

2. *The mind of a good man cannot fail also to be deeply affected with the solemnity of this institution.*

When God had ended the glorious work of creation, ' he rested the seventh day from all the work which he had made.' The creation was now fresh from the forming hand of Jehovah. The great Architect had ' builded his stories in the heaven ; had numbered the stars, and called them all by their names ; had appointed the moon for seasons, and caused the sun to know his going down ' He had

filled the world with beauty and fragrance, with glory and grandeur, with life and immortality. In the full view of this transporting, this amazing scene, in the strong apprehension of the infinite perfections which it unfolded, 'the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy:' while the Author of all things beheld the works which his hands had made, and pronounced them 'very good.' The praise begun by angels, our first parents reiterated on the first morning of their existence, and made their delightful residence vocal with hymns to their Creator. The first employment of Paradise, the first work done by man, was the worship of God. Thus the dawn of human existence was opened by the same divine employment, which will unceasingly occupy the everlasting day of heaven.

When the command to 'remember' this day was given, there were 'in the morning thunders, and lightnings, and a thick cloud,' upon mount Sinai, and 'the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke; because the Lord descended upon it in fire, and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace; and the whole mount quaked greatly.' In the midst of this amazing grandeur, in the midst of these awful terrors, God with his own voice spoke this command, and wrote it with his own finger. With this example and with these solemnities was one day in seven consecrated to Jehovah.

When the new creation was finished, the creation of holiness in the soul of man, the creation of a church, comprising immense multitudes of immortal minds, as a holy and eternal kingdom unto God, Christ arose from the dead to endless life and glory, 'became the first-fruits of them that slept,' and their forerunner into the heavens. On this divine occasion, the same exalted beings, who sang together when the heavens and the earth were made, and proclaimed 'glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good-will towards men,' when the Saviour of

the world was born, now renewed their songs, and entered with Christ into the highest heavens, with all the pomp and splendour, which invested Sinai at the promulgation of the law.

On this day the Spirit of grace and truth descended upon the apostles of our Lord and Saviour; baptized them with fire, endued them with inspiration, the gift of tongues, and the spirit of prophecy, gave them to understand the gospel in its glorious mysteries, and enabled them, with wonderful miracles, to prove its divine origin, and thus to erect the spiritual kingdom of God in the world.

All these examples, the most august, the most amazing which the universe ever beheld, leave their whole weight, their infinite authority, upon this institution. Every Christian, therefore, while he keeps the sabbath holy unto God, ought, in order to quicken himself in his duty, to remember that on this sacred day God rested; that his Redeemer rested; that the Spirit of grace descended; and that angels repeatedly united together in enraptured praise. Nor ought he, in any wise, to forget that no institution can plead so many and so great things done to solemnize and consecrate it as holy unto God, and as indispensably binding upon man.

3. *We learn from the observations already made with what emotions the sabbath ought to be regarded by us.*

We assemble in the house of God, to glorify him in the religious worship which he has appointed, to seek the everlasting life of our own souls, to obtain and increase holiness in our hearts, to remember, admire, and celebrate the wonderful works of the old and new creations, and the glorious perfections of the Creator and Redeemer. What emotions ought we to feel while engaged in this divine employment? Such unquestionably as angels experienced, when these works were done, and these perfections were displayed.

Particularly, *the sabbath demands of all men profound reverence and solemn awe.* All the things, which have been mentioned, are supremely great, sublime, and

wonderful. The most awful of all beings is brought near to our hearts, and presents himself before our eyes, in manifestations of a most majestic and astonishing nature. Had we been present at the work of creation, and heard the awful command, which brought into being the immense mass of original elements; had we seen the light, at the bidding of the great workman, disclose and involve the formless confusion; the sea and the dry land separate; the grass, the herbs, and the trees instantaneously arise, and clothe the earth in one universal robe of life and beauty; the sun, the moon, and the stars lighted up in the heavens; the various animals filling the world with living beings; and man, the lord, the crown, and the glory of the whole, formed a rational and immortal being, to understand, enjoy, and celebrate, the divine work; could we have failed to experience the most profound awe, amid this complication of infinite wonders, and to glorify the great Author of them with that 'fear of the Lord,' which is 'the beginning of wisdom?'

Had we again been present at the crucifixion of our divine Redeemer, and beheld the earth tremble, the rocks rend, the veil of the temple part asunder, the graves open, the saints arise, and the sun hide his face in darkness; had we accompanied his body to the tomb, and watched the descent of the angel, the convulsions of the second earthquake, the lightnings which streamed from his countenance, and the swooning of the guards who kept the sepulchre; had we seen our Lord resume his life, come forth from the grave to his doubting, trembling disciples; had we seen him rise from the earth, enter the bosom of the cloud of glory, and, with a solemn and magnificent progress, ascend to the heavens; must not the same awful emotions have been instinctively renewed?

But all these things, this sacred day, this divine festival, places before our eyes. If, at the same time, we farther remember, that we are in the house of God; that hither he comes to meet us on designs of

infinite love, to forgive our sins, to renew, receive, and save our souls; that we stand before him as sinners, as apostates, condemned, ruined, helpless, and in ourselves hopeless also; that we are suppliants for mere mercy, dependant on the obedience of another, and without any righteousness of our own; must we not feel our littleness and our guilt? Must we not, instinctively, 'lay our hands on our mouths, and our mouths in the dust, and cry, Unclean?' Can we fail to fear 'that glorious and fearful name, Jehovah, our God?'

This emotion every thing in the Scriptures conspires to improve and strengthen. The law of God, with all its commands, promises, and threatenings, its divine rewards and amazing penalties; the gospel, with its solemn establishments of the law, its remedies for the imperfections of the law, as the means of life for sinners, its glorious invitations, supreme allurements, and heavenly promises; conspire with infinite force to persuade us to 'fear the Lord our God,' and to 'tremble at his word.' He who is thoughtless and irreverent here, ought to have considered how he would have felt amid the thunders, the lightnings, the earthquake, the sound of the trumpet, and the flame of devouring fire, from which the Creator said, 'Remember the sabbath-day, to keep it holy.' To this man, more than to almost any other sinner, is addressed that humbling rebuke, 'The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know; my people doth not consider.'

At the same time, *the sabbath is to be regarded with peculiar joy.*

All things relating to the sabbath are not only solemn, but joyful things. At the creation, a new universe started up into being, and life, reason, virtue, and immortality were given to an endless multitude of creatures. At the new creation an endless multitude of perishing sinners, destined to eternal sin and eternal woe, were recalled from the melancholy regions of death and depravity to immortal holiness,

life, and glory. On these stupendous occasions 'all the sons of God shouted for joy.' We are still more interested in the last of them than they could be for *we* are the miserable beings who are redeemed and saved. On the sabbath, the great body of the church has been brought into the kingdom of grace and prepared for the kingdom of glory. On the first sabbath, upon which began the great work of erecting the kingdom of Christ in the world by the apostles, three thousand souls were added unto the Lord. On the first sabbath the apostles were 'baptized with the Holy Ghost, and with fire,' and divinely empowered to spread salvation through the world. On the sabbath the souls of men have ever since been flocking into the kingdom of Christ, and taking possession of immortality. The sabbath has been the great means of preserving that kingdom. To the sabbath it is owing, that the glad tidings of salvation are now heard in this desolate world. To the sabbath it is owing, that in this land, where, ever since the deluge, nothing was heard but the howlings of wild beasts, the war-screams of savages, or the groans of torture and death, now through a thousand churches is weekly resounded the music of heaven, and the proclamation of life-eternal to mankind. 'The sabbath is appropriately 'the accepted time;' it is eminently 'the day of salvation.' To the sabbath will our salvation be owed, if we attain salvation. On the sabbath all Christian assemblies meet to offer up their humble prayers; to send up their hymns of praise to their 'Father who is in heaven;' to teach, and receive, 'the words of eternal life;' 'to be baptized into the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;' and to receive the body and blood of their crucified Redeemer. On the sabbath the Christian world bears, in this manner, no unhappy resemblance of heaven; and a little part of the melancholy hours of time become a fair image of the pure and never-ending sabbath beyond the grave.

With these delightful things in view, can we fail

to unite with 'the church of the first-born,' and 'the innumerable company of angels,' and repeat and respond their divine exultation? Shall not our songs bear a humble unison with theirs? Shall not the joy which they feel on the great business of the day, the repentance and return of sinners, find a welcome admission to our hearts? Shall we not '*rejoice in him that made us?*' Shall not 'the children of Zion be joyful in their king?'

God on this day rejoiced over the creation which his hands had made. Angels rejoiced in the wonders of the work, and in the divine workman. Christ rejoiced over the church, which he redeemed with his own blood. Heaven has rejoiced at every return of this delightful season, and renewed its transports over all the sons of Adam, whom this day has with divine efficacy raised from death to life. 'The Lord God is' now our 'sun and our shield.' Now 'he gives grace and glory.' This day 'he withholds no good things from them that walk uprightly.' Let mortals behold these things with wonder and gratulation, and anticipate the pure and permanent transports of the everlasting sabbath in the heavens.

Nor is this holy day to be less regarded with *gratitude*.

All the benevolent things which God has done for us this day brings before our eyes. Our being, our daily blessings, our redemption, our salvation, the resumed character of holiness, the title to endless life, the final escape from sin and misery, this heavenly season proclaims with an unceasing voice. At this season, God comes down to dwell among men, divested, with respect to all who are willing to receive him, of the awful frowns of an offended judge, clothed with the smiles of an eternal benefactor, and adorned with the endearing titles of the Father, the Redeemer, and the Sanctifier of man. Here the calls to gratitude are all united. The blessings of earth and heaven, of time and eternity, here invite us to love and praise the author of all our mercies. Can we fail to 'render to him according to his be-

nefits?" Can we fail this day to ascribe 'blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, to him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever?'

4. *How ought the Christian church to bless God for this institution.*

To this institution we owe far the greater part of the spiritual blessings which we enjoy, and, in a high sense, we owe them all. But for this day, we should neither have sought nor secured eternal life; for where no sabbath is, there is no religion. But for this day, earthly things would have engrossed all our thoughts. Honour, wealth, and pleasure are the real syrens, which charm mankind to shipwreck and death. To their songs the ear of man is by nature attuned, and the heart beats in regular response. But for this day, the world, as a canker, would rust, corrupt, and consume all the disposition to piety, and all the hopes of heaven. The soul would be benumbed. Religion would die. God would be forgotten. The death of Christ would be vain. Mankind would cease to be saved: and heaven would fail of her destined inhabitants. How desolate the prospect! How strongly would this world resemble the regions of final despair; where no sabbath dawns, where no prayers nor praises ascend, no sermons proclaim pardon and peace to sinners, the voice of mercy never sounds, and the smiles of forgiving, redeeming, and sanctifying love never illumine the dreary valley of the shadow of death!

All things pertaining to salvation are *social* things; things of general participation and powerful sympathy. They exist chiefly in multitudes. Without the sabbath, there is no reason to believe that they could exist at all. Not where *one* is employed in religious worship merely, nor principally; but where two or three are met together in the name of Christ, is his presence promised. Not in the closet, the recess, or the solitude. but 'on Zion, whither the tribes go up, has the Lord commanded a blessing, even life for evermore.'

5. *What an illustrious type is the sabbath of the everlasting rest enjoyed by the children of God !*

The sabbath is a rest from sin, business, and pleasure ; a day in which God is worshipped, divine knowledge improved, and holiness attained and increased ; a day in which saints delightfully commune, and joyfully celebrate the wonders of creation, and the sublimer wonders of redemption. On the sabbath God is peculiarly present, reconciled, forgiving, and sanctifying ; and the Spirit of truth eminently communicates comfortable evidence of divine love, whispers peace, and inspires joy. The sabbath is, therefore, the day of hope and consolation, of enjoyment and triumph ; the foretaste of heaven ; the entrance to the glorious assembly of the blessed.

The future rest of the children of God is divinely formed of these delightful ingredients. Here eternal peace begins its undisturbed reign over all the great kingdom of Jehovah. Here immortal minds are consummated in that holiness, which is the image of the heavenly Adam. Here those minds, in the exercise of that holiness, with exalted friendship and pure unbosomed intercourse, commence their everlasting joy. Here ‘God is all in all.’ Here he unveils his face, and discloses the smiles of infinite love to the assembly of the first-born. And here, ‘the Lamb, the glory of God,’ and ‘the light’ of heaven, illumines all their thoughts, quickens all their affections, ‘feeds them with living bread, leads them to fountains of living waters,’ and awakens into transport their hymns of never-ending praise.

SERMON CX.

THE LAW OF GOD. THE DECALOGUE

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT.

DUTY OF CHILDREN.

Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.—EXOD. XX. 12.

THE four first commands of the decalogue enjoin those which are called the duties of *piety*. These were written on the first table, and were summed up by Moses and by Christ in this general one; 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.' We are now entering upon the consideration of the six last; directing what are commonly called the duties of *morality*, or our duties towards *mankind*. These were written upon the second table, and are summed up by Moses, by Christ, and by St. Paul, in 'the second great command,' styled by St. James the 'royal law, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' The first of these commands is the text. As a general preface to the observations which I propose to make, successively, on these commands, it will be proper to remark, that they are universally to be extended according to the interpretation given by our Saviour of the sixth and seventh, in his sermon on the mount. In commenting on the former of these, Christ teaches us, that to be 'angry with our brother without a cause,' to 'say unto him Raca, or thou fool,' is to be guilty of a breach of this command. In commenting on the seventh, he declares, that 'whosoever looketh on a woman, to lust after her, the same hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.' Generally, *all these precepts are to be considered as directing our duty in all respects which, by inference or analogy, can be fairly arranged*

under them. Accordingly (to give an example), I shall consider this command as regulating the duties reciprocally owed by parents and children, magistrates and subjects, and by other classes of mankind in their several relations. That I am warranted in this mode of explaining these precepts, is, I think, evident from the conduct of our Saviour. I shall only add, that in this manner they have been generally understood by divines, and extensively declared in catechisms: For example, in that of the Westminster Assembly, that of Dr. Novell, and that of King Edward. In the examination of the subjects involved in this command, I shall begin with that which is directly expressed—*the duty of children to their parents.*

The word ‘honour,’ by which this duty is here enjoined, is chosen with supreme felicity; as being sufficiently comprehensive, and sufficiently definite, to express with as much exactness as can easily be compassed all the several branches of duty which parents can equitably demand of their children. Particularly, it is explained by Christ, commenting Matt. xv. 3, on the vile fetch by which the Pharisees released their disciples from obedience to this precept, to involve the obligation of children to support *their parents in their indigence and old age.* It is also explained by St. Paul, as enjoining *the universal obedience of children.* In its own primary sense, also, it denotes *all the affection and veneration which children owe to their parents,* and which constitute so extensive and important a part of filial piety.

Filial duties are so numerous, that many volumes might be written on this subject only, without particularizing them all. Within the limits prescribed to these Discourses, it is obvious nothing more can be done, than to exhibit briefly the prominent things included in this and the following precepts. Nothing more, therefore, will be attempted. According to this plan filial duty may be advantageously comprised under the following heads:—

I. *Children are bound to regard their parents with*

respect and reverence at all times.

Particularly, these exercises of filial piety are,

1. *To exist in the thoughts.*

‘Keep thy heart,’ said David to Solomon, ‘with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. All good proceeds from this source, as well as all evil. In vain will children labour to perform their duty in any other manner, if they neglect it in this. Here, the whole course of filial piety begins; and, if not commenced here, will never be pursued with any success. Thoughts are the soul, the living principle, of all duty. Every thing else is a lifeless body without a soul, and a shadow without a substance.

Every child is bound to entertain the most respectful and reverential *thoughts* concerning his parents, and concerning the parental character. He is to remember and regard his parents, as standing in the most venerable and the most endearing of all earthly relations to him; as those to whom, under God, he owes his being, and the great mass of his blessings. He is to regard them as the persons to whose kindness, care, and government he has been committed by God himself. He is to consider them as the best of all friends; the most affectionate, the most faithful, the most confidential, the most persevering, the most watchful, the most unwearied.

His *affections* towards them ought ever to be reverential, grateful, warm, and full of kindness. Whatever his plans or purposes are, he ought invariably to feel, that they will be most safely, and in every case of any importance should be regularly, entrusted to them for advice and direction. Parents, unless when under the immediate influence of some strong passion or prejudice, very rarely oppose of design the real interests of their children. Almost all the counsels, injunctions, and reproofs which they give, and which the children at times consider as unkind, are given, intentionally at least, for their good, and ought to be regarded only in this manner. Children are bound to fix in their minds an habitual sense of the superior station and wisdom of their parents, and

of their own inferiority in all these respects. Their thoughts and affections towards them ought, universally, to spring from this sense of their superiority; a superiority originated by the creating hand of God, and consummated by his most holy law. To this sense ought all their views to be conformed. The beginnings of irreverence, the first tendencies towards disadvantageous, light, disrespectful apprehensions concerning them, they are bound to crush in the bud, and to cultivate with watchful care every affectionate and respectful emotion.

By the providence of God it is frequently brought to pass, that parents are in humble life, uneducated, ignorant, little regarded by the world, irreligious, not unfrequently openly vicious, and sometimes plainly scandalous. Here filial piety, it must be acknowledged, becomes a harder task; and especially in the last-mentioned cases, is attended with serious difficulty in its various duties. Children are, however, to remember that God has given even the children of such parents no dispensation with respect to their filial duties. The command in the text is addressed to *them* no less absolutely than to *other* children. As their case is more difficult, they are required to make more careful and vigorous exertions; to forget the personal character, and to remember only the parental. The children may be better educated, may know more, may have better dispositions, and may sustain better characters. Let them remember that to God, in the first place, and ordinarily, to these very parents in the second, they owe these blessings; and let them shew their gratitude, their superior understanding, to the eye of him from whom they derive their all, by cultivating the sentiments which I have urged, and by resisting effectually those which I have condemned. He who gave them parents, he who made them children, he who said to them, 'Honour thy father and thy mother,' has an indisputable right to require this conduct at their hands. If the duty is difficult, it is proportionally excellent, honourable, and lovely.

2. *The same exercises of filial piety are to be manifested in the words of children.*

The words uttered by children which respect their parents in any manner, are to correspond with the thoughts which have been here recommended, and, if effectual care is taken to make the thoughts right, the words will be right of course.

When children speak to their parents, they are required ever to speak modestly, submissively, and respectfully. Whatever opinions children may entertain, which may differ from those of their parents in any case, it is their duty to propose with humility, meekness, and respect. They are to address them, not as disputants, not as equals ; but as children, as modest inferiors. Both their words, and their manner of uttering them, should bear unequivocal evidence that they are conscious of this character.

When children speak of their parents to others, they are bound to speak with the most exact caution, and with similar respect ; and never to say any thing concerning them which they would be unwilling to say to them when present. It is their duty invariably to endeavour, so far as truth and propriety will admit, to render the character of their parents respectable in the eyes of others. The faults of their parents it is their duty to conceal, their excellences always readily to admit, and to experience and manifest their satisfaction when others admit them. They are not, indeed, to boast of the good qualities of their parents, as they are not to boast of any thing else ; but with modesty and propriety to welcome them, when mentioned by others ; and, when they have a becoming occasion, to speak of them themselves.

Sometimes children are compelled to the mortification of hearing their parents ill spoken of by others. Their duty then requires them, whenever they can do it with success, to repel the ungenerous attack, and to defend the character of their parents. If this is not in their power, they are bound to manifest their indignation and disgust by such declarations as the

nature of the case demands ; and at least to prevent themselves from the pain and mischief produced by such conversation, by withdrawing finally from persons of this unreasonable and abusive character.

3. *The same spirit ought to appear in all the deportment of children.*

The deportment of children, when their parents are present, ought to exhibit every mark of respect. The 'honour' required in the text ought, in the literal sense, to be here invariably rendered without qualification, without reserve, without reluctance. However humble the station, the circumstances, the education, or the manners of parents may be, the child, instead of discovering that he is ashamed of them, or of assuming to himself airs of importance, is bound cheerfully to acknowledge their proper superiority, to exhibit towards them a respectful deference, and always to prevent even a remote suspicion that he is reluctant to give them their proper place.

II. *Children are bound to obey the commands of their parents.*

That it is the province of parents to govern, and that of children to obey, will not be questioned. Nor will it be doubted, that children are equally bound to abstain from things prohibited by their parents, as to perform those which they enjoin. Of this obedience it may be observed,

1. *That it ought to be uniform and faithful.*

'Children,' says St. Paul, 'obey your parents in all things ; for this is right, and well pleasing to the Lord.' To the universality of this precept there is but one exception ; and that is, when the injunction is contrary to the law of God. The obedience of little children ought undoubtedly to be implicit. They are plainly incapable of directing their own conduct, and parents are appointed by God himself to direct it. While it is the duty of the parent to instruct his child in the nature of moral conduct, and the reasonableness and rectitude of his own commands, as fast as the understanding of the child will permit, and to give no commands which are

not agreeable to the will of God, it is undoubtedly the duty of the child to obey every parental precept, except such as are of this nature. To this rule I know of no exception.

Filial obedience is commonly rendered without much difficulty, when parents are present. Every child should remember that his obligations to obedience are not lessened by their absence; that God is then present; that he has required them not to obey with eye-service; and that he records all their conduct in the book of his remembrance.

They are also ever to keep in mind, that they are required to obey *difficult* commands, as well as those which are *easy*; those which require much self-denial, labour, and trouble, as well as those which are attended only with pleasure; those in which their disobedience will never be detected, as well as those in which it will certainly be known. No other obedience deserves the name of faithful.

2. *Filial obedience ought to be ready and cheerful.*

This is the only obedience which commends itself to the common sense of mankind, or which is of any value in the sight of God. In this obedience the heart is concerned, and the child active. Every thing else which goes under this name is constrained, hypocritical, a cheat, a sin. No other is regarded in the Scriptures. To sustain this character, the obedience of children should be rendered without opposition, and without delay. A great part of the value of filial obedience arises from the manner in which it is rendered. God himself 'loves the cheerful giver.' Mankind have exactly the same views of this subject, and universally consider that which is done grudgingly, as little better, and often worse, than if it had not been done at all.

III. *Children are bound to do whatever will reasonably contribute to the happiness of their parents, whether commanded or not.*

The modes in which this part of filial duty is to be rendered are so numerous, that it is impossible to recite them. It will be sufficient to observe at the

present time, that no filial piety is more lovely, or more accordant with the text, than that which attentively prevents the wants, the commands, and the wishes of parents; which adds to their comforts, and lessens their troubles, in a thousand indescribable ways, readily offering themselves to the mind of a dutiful child.

One of the happiest modes of obeying the text is found in the *discreet, amiable, and virtuous behaviour of children*. Parents are delightfully honoured when their children exhibit excellent conduct before mankind, and thus acquire the approbation and goodwill of those around them. In this case they render a very pleasing and very honourable tribute to the parental wisdom, care, and faithfulness employed in their education; and shew in the strongest manner, that the precepts by which they have been trained up have been received by them with such reverence and piety, as to have a commanding influence upon their lives. In this manner children become 'the glory of their parents, and the crown of gray hairs.'

The duties of children obviously change with the change of age and circumstances. When they are *very young*, their obedience, as I remarked, must be implicit. They are to obey without investigation, inquiry, or doubt; for this plain reason, that they are incapable altogether of judging for themselves. But they are to be taught to judge, as early as their years and understanding will permit. This is indispensable; because by learning habitually the reasons on which their parents' commands are founded, they will soon learn to think that they are all reasonable; and obey them with more readiness and exactness on this account; and because many cases will occur, in which their parents cannot be present, and in which therefore they must judge for themselves. This, it is plain, they cannot do, unless they are taught. As they *advance* in years and understanding, the nature of their obedience will vary; chiefly from this circumstance, that they understand their duty, and the reasons on which it is founded; and are therefore

required to perform it from a due regard to its nature and importance, to the law of God which established it, and to the character and kindness of their parents which demand it from their reverence and their gratitude. In other respects, their obedience is founded on the same principles, during the whole period of their nonage.

Nor do the same rules apply to them in a very different manner after they have arrived at *adult years*, so long as they continue in their father's house, and are members of his family. In this situation, however, the circumstances of both parents and children vary so much, that the relations and duties of both are usually modified by some plan or compact between them, sufficiently understood to serve as a rule, by which the conduct of the child is to be directed. I shall therefore think it necessary only to observe, that when children have faithfully performed their duty to this period, they rarely fail on performing it afterward.

When children have *left their father's house*, their circumstances become more materially changed, and with them, in several respects, their duties. They then have separate interests, and business of their own, and usually families also. When God instituted marriage, he authorized children to leave the house and government of their parents. 'For this cause,' said the Creator, 'shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife,' Matt. xix. 4, 5. In this situation, then, children become parents, heads of families, invested with all the authority, possessed of all the rights, and subjected to all the duties, pertaining to their own parents. It is impossible, that in these circumstances they should fulfil their former duties, as children under the government of their parents, unless they neglect those which are indispensable in their present situation. From many of these duties therefore they are released.

Still, as they are more indebted to their parents than to any other human beings, and incomparably

more indebted, at least in ordinary cases, their remaining duties to their parents are numerous and important. In this situation, more frequently than any other, they are required to contribute to the maintenance of their parents. This is made by our Saviour to be so important a branch of the command in our text, that he declares the Pharisees, who by a fraudulent comment on this precept had released men from the duty in question, to have 'made this command of God of none effect by their tradition.' In this period also they are bound, as much as may be, to nurse and soothe their parents in pain and sickness, to bear patiently and kindly their infirmities of body and mind, to alleviate their distresses, to give them the cheering influence of their company and conversation, and in these and various other ways to serene and brighten the evening, but too frequently a melancholy one, of old age.

The children of *sinful* parents have always a difficult task to perform. To a pious child, a parent visibly going down in the broad and crooked road that leads to destruction, is a sight beyond measure distressing. That a child thus situated is bound in every discreet and efficacious manner to prevent, as far as may be, the awful catastrophe, will not be questioned, unless by an atheist. What is to be done in so dreadful a case, it will be impossible to prescribe here, unless in very general terms. Every child will know indeed, without information, that his prayers are to be offered up for his parent, and his own pious example presented to him, without ceasing. Every child also knows that all his own measures, whatever they may be in other respects, are to be obedient, modest, and reverential. No other measures can, in these circumstances, be hopefully followed by any good consequences. Still they may be sufficiently plain and unequivocal as to their meaning.

Among the efforts made by such a child, in addition to his own discreet personal conduct and conversation, few seem better fitted to answer the end

in view, than inducing persons possessed of known wisdom and piety, especially those of an engaging deportment, frequently to visit the parent, and persuading him also often to visit them; placing books of a religious nature, written in a pleasing and interesting manner, within his reach; alluring him regularly to the house of God, and to private religious assemblies; and introducing, without any apparent design, religious topics, especially those which are peculiarly interesting, as often as may be with propriety. In my own view, the child is also bound modestly, submissively, and discreetly, to remonstrate against the visible wickedness of the parent. I can see no reason which will justify a child in the omission of this duty, although I am not unaware of the peculiar difficulties which attend it, nor unapprized of the peculiar delicacy and prudence which it demands. Reproof, even from equals or superiors, requires more skill and care, in order to render it successful, than fall to the lot of most men. In a child to a parent it must be singularly embarrassing.

A less delicate task, yet still attended with many difficulties, lies in avoiding the influence, naturally presented, and often but too efficaciously, by the sentiments, precepts, and examples, of evil parents. The parental character is so venerable, so authoritative, so endearing, and so persuasive, that the child who escapes its malignant influence when employed to encourage sin, may well be considered as eminently the object of the divine favour. Still it is possible, and has existed in multiplied instances. Abijah escaped even in the house of Jeroboam, Hezekiah in that of Ahaz, and Josiah in that of Amon. Thus also has the fact often been in all succeeding ages of time. Children, therefore, instead of despairing, should gird themselves with watchfulness and resolution suited to their circumstances; should continually and fervently beseech God to guard them by his good Spirit from the dangers in which they stand; should watch their own conduct with peculiar anxiety; should seek for wisdom and direction from

religious books, especially from the Scriptures ; and should ask advice, countenance, and assistance from those among their friends who are persons of piety. The company of such persons counteracts, in a manner invaluable, the influence of evil example. ' He that walketh with wise men,' says God, ' shall be wise.'

Having thus given a summary account of the duties of children, I shall now proceed to mention several reasons to enforce them.

1. *Every considerate child will feel his filial duty strongly urged by the excellence of this conduct, and the odiousness of filial impiety.*

This is one of the few moral subjects concerning which all men are agreed. The writers, of all ages and of all countries, have taught us with a single voice, that to the common eye of mankind no object is more amiable, or more delightful, than a dutiful and virtuous child. This charming object commends itself at first view to the natural feelings, the judgment, and the conscience of all men. It commends itself at once, without deliberation, and without doubt. It has commended itself to persons of every character, in every age, and in every country. It is esteemed, it is loved. The affection which it excites, and the reputation which it produces, are sincere, solid, and permanent. Nothing more certainly generates esteem, nothing more uniformly creates friends. It is a kind of glory, surrounding the child wherever he goes ; seen, felt, and acknowledged by all men, and conferring a distinction otherwise unattainable. All persons presage well of such a child ; and he is expected of course to fill every station to which his talents are suited with propriety and honour.

An undutiful child, on the contrary, brands his own character with odiousness and infamy. No person sees him, or thinks of him, without pain and disgust. No parent is willing that his own children should become his companions. The vilest persons regard him with contempt and abhorrence, the best,

with pity and indignation. A parent on his death-bed hardly knows how to ask a blessing for him; and those who survive are still more unable to believe it will descend upon his head.

2. *Considerate children will find another powerful reason for filial duty in the pleasure which it gives their parents.*

Nothing which takes place in human life creates a higher, more genuine, or more unmingled pleasure, in the minds of parents, than the pious and dutiful conduct of their children. It is indeed impossible that a child should form adequate conceptions of the delight which such conduct awakens in the parental heart. Experience only can completely teach the nature of this emotion. Still, children cannot but know that their parents in this manner find exquisite enjoyment; nor can they be ignorant, that to produce it is one of their own chief blessings, as well as one of their indispensable duties. Filial piety is a continual feast; an ample reward for every parental care, toil, watching, anxiety, and prayer. It sweetens all the bitterness of human life; and adds an exquisite relish to every comfort. The burdens of life it makes light and easy, and is the most supporting stay on this side of heaven to the weary steps of declining age.

An undutiful child, on the other hand, is 'a broken reed, on which if a man lean, it shall thrust through his hand, and pierce him.' 'A foolish son is a heaviness' alike 'to his' father and 'his mother;' a spot on their character, a trial of their patience, a blast upon their hopes, a nuisance to their family, and a thorn in their hearts.

3. *The demands of gratitude present a combination of such reasons, to every such child, for the same conduct.*

Parental love is unrivalled by any affection of the human breast in its strength, its tenderness, its patience, its permanency, and its cheerful self-denial. The labours which it undergoes, and the willingness with which it undergoes them, are unexampled in the concerns of man. No other affection toils with

the same readiness and patience, or voluntarily encounters the same watchings, cares, pains, and anxieties. None prompts so many prayers, none awakens so many tears. Most of human life, after we arrive at adult age, is spent in providing for the wants, alleviating the sufferings, removing the diseases, furnishing the education, guarding the conduct, securing the safety, accomplishing the settlement, and promoting the salvation, of children. More is done by parents, and daily done, than children can ever realize, until they are called to do the same things for their own offspring. All at the same time are efforts of tenderness merely. These efforts are almost without number, this tenderness almost without degree. What child, who remembers that he is indebted to his parents for his being, and under God for almost every blessing which he enjoys, for almost all that he is, and almost all that he has, can fail to feel, and to acknowledge, that the utmost which he can do in the proper course of filial piety, is an imperfect requital for such affections and such blessings as these? That there are such *beings* I am reluctantly compelled to confess. *Children* they ought not to be called. They are unworthy of the name. They are monstrous productions, out of the course of nature; and, like all such productions, fill the mind only with loathing and horror. Let such children remember, that they are objects of still more abhorrence to God, than to men. Let them remember, that this great and awful Being, who has styled himself the Father of mankind, and who has imaged his own tenderness for his creatures by that of a father to his children, will, at the final day vindicate the parental rights in a terrible manner, by inflicting the severest punishment on undutiful children.

4. *The great advantages of filial piety present strong reasons for the practice of it to children of every character.*

Of the text St. Paul observes, when enjoining the duties of it upon the children of the Ephesian Christians, that 'it is the first commandment with pro-

mise. Accordingly, he urges their obedience to it upon the very ground of this promise, that 'their days also might be long upon the land, which the Lord their God had given them.' This promise, therefore, to such an extent, that an apostle thought proper to urge it upon the Ephesian Christians, extends to the Gentiles. The promises to the Jews, in most instances, announced temporal blessings only. Those which are made to Christians chiefly convey spiritual blessings. But that which is contained in the text conveys temporal blessings also. In conversing with the plain people of this country, distinguished for their good sense, and careful observation of facts, I have found them, to a great extent, firmly persuaded of the verification of 'his promise in our own days ; and ready to produce a variety of proofs from cases in which they have seen the blessing realized. Their opinion on this subject is mine and with their experience my own has coincided.

Indeed, no small measure of prosperity seems ordinarily *interwoven* with a course of filial piety. The comfort which it ensures to parents, the harmony which it produces in the family, the peace which it yields to the conscience, are all essential ingredients of happiness. To these it adds the approbation of every beholder, the possession of a fair and lasting reputation, the confidence and good-will of every worthy man, and, of consequence, an opportunity of easily gaining those useful employments which worthy men have to give. Beyond this, it naturally associates with itself that temperance, moderation, and sobriety, which furnish a solid foundation for health and long life. In my own apprehension, however, these are not *all* its blessings. I do not believe that miracles are wrought for its reward; neither will I say, that purer gales breathe to preserve its health ; nor that softer suns arise, or more timely rains descend to mature its harvests ; nor that more propitious winds blow, to waft its ships home in safety. But I will say, that on the tide of providence multiplied blessings are borne into its

possession, at seasons when they are unexpected, in ways unforeseen, and by means unprovided by its own forecast, which are often of high importance; which altogether constitute a rich proportion of prosperity, and which usually are not found by persons of the contrary character.

At the same time, those who act well as children, almost, of course, act well as men and women; and thus have taken, without design, the scion of happiness from the parental stock, and grafted it upon other stems, which bear fruit abundantly to themselves. Here, in the language of Dr. Watts,

‘ It revives, and bears
A train of blessings for their heirs.

It is also never to be forgotten, that filial piety, if derived from an evangelical source, is entitled to the peculiar favour of God in the present world, and to the everlasting blessings of the world to come.

5. *The declarations of God concerning this important subject, furnish reasons at once alluring and awful, for the exercise of filial piety.*

The text is an illustrious example of this nature, of the most persuasive kind. Deut. xxi. 18, gives us a terrible one concerning the stubborn and rebellious son. ‘ The eye,’ says Agur, ‘ that mocketh at his father, and refuseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.’

One of the most interesting accounts of this subject to be found in the Scriptures, as it has struck my mind, is exhibited in the thirty-fifth chapter of Jeremiah. Jonadab, the son of Rechab, commanded his children, and their posterity, ‘ neither to drink wine, nor to build houses, nor to sow seed, nor to plant vineyards, but to dwell in tents from generation to generation.’ The Rechabites obeyed his voice; and, at the time of Jeremiah, had for three hundred years lived in the manner which their ancestor enjoined. As a reward of their filial obedience, the prophet Jeremiah was sent unto the Rechabites with

this remarkable message: 'Thus saith Jehovah of Hosts, the God of Israel, Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab, your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according to all that he hath commanded you; therefore thus saith Jehovah of Hosts, the God of Israel, Jonadab, the son of Rechab, shall not want a man to stand before me for ever.'

6. *The example of Christ is a reason of the highest import to compel the exercise of filial piety.*

This wonderful person, notwithstanding his great and glorious character, and sublime destination, was the fairest specimen of obedience to parents ever seen in the present world. Let children remember that, 'if they have not the spirit of Christ, they are none of his.' He was subject to his parents, as a child of their family, until he was thirty years of age; and forgot not, when he hung on the cross, to provide an effectual support and protection for his mother. Let all children remember, when they are weary of labouring for *their* parents, that Christ laboured for *his*; when they are impatient of their commands, that Christ cheerfully obeyed; when they are reluctant to provide for their parents, that Christ forgot himself, and provided for his mother, amid the agonies of crucifixion. **The affectionate language of this divine example to every child is 'Go thou, and do likewise.'**

SERMON CXI.

THE LAW OF GOD. THE DECALOGUE.

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT.

DUTY OF PARENTS.

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.—PROV. xxii. 6.

IN the preceding Discourse I gave a brief account of the duties of *children*. I shall now proceed to consider the duties of *parents*. This also I must consider in a very summary manner, notwithstanding the copiousness and importance of the subject.

In this passage of Scripture, parents are directed to ‘train up their children in the way in which they should go;’ and, to encourage them to this duty, a promise is given, that their children, if trained in this way, ‘will not depart from it.’ The word *train* originally denotes to *draw along* by a regular and steady course of exertions; and is, hence, very naturally used to signify *drawing from one action to another*, by *persuasions, promises, and other efforts*, continually repeated. In a loose and general sense, therefore, it may easily include all the duties of parents to their children.

The way in which a child should go, is undoubtedly the way in which it is best for him to go, with respect both to his temporal and eternal well-being.

These duties are customarily, and justly, distributed under three heads:

The maintenance,

The education;

The settlement of children.

The maintenance of children must unquestionably be such as the circumstances of the parents will admit, consistently with the dictates of prudence, and such as will secure comfort to their children. Their food and raiment, their employments and gratifica-

tions, ought to be all such as to promote their health. They are carefully to be nursed in sickness, and guarded from danger. Their enjoyments of every kind ought invariably to be innocent ; reasonable in their number and degree ; evident testimonies of parental wisdom, as well as of parental affection ; such as shall prevent them from suffering unnecessary mortification ; and such as shall not flatter pride, foster avarice, or encourage sloth or sensuality. They ought also to be such as to place them upon the same level with the children of other discreet parents in similar circumstances.

The *education* of children involves their *instruction* and *government*.

The *instruction* of children includes the *things* which they are to be taught, and the *manner of teaching* them.

The *things* which children are to be taught, may be distributed under the two heads of *natural knowledge*, and *moral knowledge*.

Natural knowledge includes,

1. *Their learning.*

By this I intend every thing which they are to gain from *books* ; whether it be *learning*, appropriately so called, or the knowledge of *arts and sciences*. Of this subject I observe generally, that, like the maintenance of children, it must comport with the circumstances of the parents. It ought also to be suited to the character, talents, and destination of the child. But an acquaintance with reading, writing, and arithmetic is indispensably necessary to every child. It is indispensable, that every child should read the Scriptures ; highly important, that he should read other religious books ; and very useful, that he should enlarge his mind by such diversified knowledge, as may render him beneficial to himself and to mankind.

2. *Natural knowledge* includes also an acquaintance with at least some one kind of useful business.

Ordinarily, this acquaintance can be gained only in the *practical* manner ; that is, by placing the child, at an early period of life, in the business which is to

be learned. After he has been instructed in reading, writing, and arithmetic, which are indispensable to the advantageous prosecution of every kind of business, he should be required to do *the very business* in which he is to be educated.

There is no greater mistake on the part of rich parents, than their neglect of educating their children to the thorough knowledge of some useful business. It is often observed, and generally felt, that such an education is unnecessary, because their children are to inherit fortunes. The children also feel, and are taught by their parents to feel, that such an education is utterly unnecessary for themselves. Both at the same time are but too apt to consider active employments, and even the knowledge necessary to direct them, as humiliating and disgraceful to the children. These are very great mistakes; the dictates of pride and vanity, and not of good sense. Were nothing but the present prosperity of children to be regarded, they ought invariably to be educated in the knowledge of useful business. Almost all the wealth in this country is in the hands of those who have acquired it by their own industry; and almost all those who inherit fortunes, dissipate them in early life, and spend their remaining days in poverty and humiliation. Ignorance of business, and its consequences, idleness and profusion, will easily, and in a short time scatter any estate. A fortune is a pond, the waters of which will soon run out; well-directed industry is a spring, whose streams are perennial.

Besides, the man who pursues no useful business, is without significance, and without reputation. The sound common sense of mankind will never annex character to useless life. He who merely hangs as a burden on the shoulders of his fellow-men, who adds nothing to the common stock of comfort, and merely spends his time in devouring it, will invariably, as well as justly, be accounted a public nuisance.

Beyond all this, every parent is bound by his duty to God, and his children, to educate them to useful

business, in order to enable them to perform their own duty ; to become blessings both to themselves and mankind ; and to possess the rational enjoyments furnished by a life of industrious activity ; in their very nature incomprehensibly superior to sloth and profusion.

Moral knowledge is all included, as well as enjoined, in the Scriptures. It is also in its own nature, either directly, or indirectly, all practical.

Knowledge of this kind is naturally distributed under the following heads :—

1. *Piety.*

To this head belongs *reverence to God*. Every child should be taught from the beginning to fear that great and glorious Being, to whom he owes his existence, his blessings, and his hopes. This knowledge is indispensable to all rectitude of character. As I have considered the general nature of this subject in a former Discourse, I shall only observe here, that nothing will, in an equal degree, secure a child from sin, strengthen him against the force of temptation, or fix his feet immoveably in the path of righteousness.

Inseparably connected with this subject is *a sense of accountableness*. Every child should know, as soon as he is capable of knowing, that he is a moral being, in a state of probation for his conduct, in which he will be hereafter judged and rewarded ; that God is an eye-witness to all his secret and open conduct alike ; and that every thing which he speaks, thinks, or does, will be the foundation of his final reward. Proper impressions of these two great subjects, habitually made in the early periods of childhood, will influence the life more than any other considerations ; will revive, after they have been long thought to have been forgotten ; and will produce happy effects, when all other causes have lost their power.

With the same care should children be accustomed to *read the Scriptures*, whenever they have become able to read. Here they will find these great subjects, as well as all others of a similar nature, placed in

the strongest light, and taught in the most perfect manner ; a manner suited to every mind capable of understanding such subjects at all. Here, particularly, facts and characters of a moral nature are exhibited with a felicity altogether unrivalled. With both of these children are delighted ; and fasten on both with that peculiar earnestness which prevents them from being ever obliterated. As they are presented in the Scriptures, they are eminently entertaining to children ; and, to a great extent, are set in so obvious a light, as to be easily understood even by very young minds.

Every child should be taught also, *that he is a sinner* ; and, as such, exposed to the *anger of God*. The efficacy of this instruction upon the early mind is of the most desirable nature. Nothing more successfully checks the growth of pride ; the most universal, the most pleasing, the most operative, and the most mischievous of all the human passions. Without this instruction, also, all other religious teaching will be in vain. He who is not conscious that he is a sinner, will never take a single step towards salvation. Happily, children very easily receive and admit this instruction. In the earlier periods of life the conscience is so far unbiassed, and possesses so great power, as to induce the heart, however reluctant in itself, regularly to acknowledge the truth of this important doctrine.

As soon as it is practicable, every child should be conducted to the *knowledge of the Saviour*. On the infinite importance of this indispensable knowledge, I need not here dwell. Suffice it to observe, that children will sooner imbibe this knowledge than parents are usually aware, and that childhood is often the only opportunity for obtaining it which they ever enjoy.

Finally ; Children should be carefully instructed in all the *external duties of piety*. They should be effectually as well as unceasingly taught to mention the name of God, and every thing obviously related to this awful Being, with profound reverence only ;

to observe the Sabbath, from the beginning to the end, with religious exactness; to be present punctiliously at the public worship of God, and to attend to all the ordinances of it with reverence and care; to attend in the same manner upon family worship; and in the same manner to perform regularly, every morning and every evening, the duty of secret prayer.

All these things should be explained to children, in such a manner as to render their views of them just and rational, and their practice of them evangelical, and not a mere matter of form.

2. *Morality; or the duties which respect our fellow-men.*

Among these, *truth* should hold the *first place*. As I expect speedily to examine the nature and importance of this subject, as well as most others which will be mentioned in this discussion, it will be unnecessary to expatiate upon them at present. It will be sufficient to say here, that a profound and reverential regard to truth should be awakened in the mind of a child, from the moment when he begins to assert any thing; that **no variation** from it, either in jest or in earnest, **should ever be permitted to pass without animadversion**; that its nature and importance should be explained to the child, as soon as he is able to understand them; that resistance to falsehood and prevarication should invariably be made unconditionally, and without any abatement; that this resistance should be made in every hopeful manner, and to every necessary degree, and should never cease, until the veracity of the child shall be effectually secured; that every encouragement to veracity which prudence can suggest should be holden out to him continually, and that a rigid example of speaking truth and fulfilling promises should be set before him by all with whom he corresponds, especially by the parents and the family, without any variation from it, either in reality or appearance, that all seeming departures from it should be carefully explained to him; and that he should be obliged to fulfil all his promises, if not unlawful, how-

ever inconvenient the fulfilment may be to the parents or to him.

Justice, by which I intend *commutative justice*, is a kindred virtue to *truth*, and should be taught from the same period with the same care. Every child should be taught to pay all his debts and fulfil all his contracts, exactly in the manner, completely in the value, and punctually at the time. Every child should be discouraged from the propensity to make bargains; so early, so strongly, and so universally visible. He should be discouraged also from every wish to make what is called a *good bargain*, the common source of all cheating; and should be taught, that he is bound to render an equivalent for what he receives. Every bargain disadvantageous to himself he should be bound scrupulously to fulfil. Everything which he has borrowed he should be obliged to return uninjured at the time; and every thing belonging to others which he has lost, he should be required to replace. In this manner he will grow up to that sense of justice, without which it is impossible for virtue to exist.

Morality, begun in *truth*, and advanced in *justice*, is finished in *kindness*. The minds of children may be easily rendered kind by a wise cultivation; and by the want of it will easily become unfeeling and cruel. Children should be taught, the first moment they are capable of being taught, a lively tenderness for the feelings, the sufferings, and the happiness of all beings with whom they are conversant. The emperor Domitian has proved, that cruelty, when it cannot satiate itself on human misery, can be gratified even with the death of flies. Every child should be invariably instructed to exercise kindness towards animals, and to shun cruelty even to an insect. The plundering of birds' nests, and the capture of their young, is in all ordinary cases, notwithstanding it is so generally allowed, an employment fitted only to harden the heart, and prepare it to be insensible to human sufferings. Still worse is the deplorable practice, extensively allowed also, of

setting up poultry as a mark, to be destroyed by gradual torture. Worse still is the practice, so widely and shamefully extended in some parts of this country, of cock-fighting; abominable for its cruelty, and detestable for its fraud. Children should never injure animals without reproof solemnly administered, nor, as the case may be, without punishment. All their unkindness to each other, and all the unkindness of others which falls within their knowledge, should be strongly and unconditionally reprobated. At the same time, every instance of their spontaneous tenderness and beneficence should be strongly commended; and, as prudence may direct, followed by suitable rewards; while every instance of cruelty should be treated with efficacious discountenance, and strenuous opposition, and should be seen to awaken in the mind of the parent detestation and horror. Among the exercises of kindness, which are of prime importance, one of the most difficult to learn is the forgiveness of injuries. On this account it should be taught early, unceasingly, and strenuously, with powerful persuasion, and distinguishing rewards. An unforgiving and revengeful spirit, on the contrary, should, however difficult and discouraging the task, be at all events broken down; and no attempt should be omitted, until this work is effectually accomplished.

3. *Self-government.*

Children should, from the beginning, be taught to be *industrious*. The value of time should be explained to them, as the means of all usefulness and enjoyment, of duty and salvation. To enable them to employ it in ~~the~~ best manner, they should be early accustomed to methodize it by useful divisions; allotting regularly one period to devotion, another to business, and another to recreation. Their business also should be methodized by subordinate divisions; one period being regularly destined to one employment, and another to another. In this manner they will soon see that far more can be accomplished than by loose and desultory efforts. Industry, naturally

disagreeable, may be rendered pleasing by address and habituation, advice and example. As this is the fountain, under God, of all human attainments and enjoyments, no exertions should be left untried to establish it, at a very early date, in the minds of children.

Upon industry in his child, every parent should graft economy. To economy the human mind is more reluctant than even to industry. In order to relish it, two great difficulties must be overcome. One is the powerful relish for the gratifications which occasion our expense. The other is the constant, laborious attention, so necessary to the practice of that branch of economy which is employed in preserving the various kinds of property. The latter of these is usually the greater difficulty ; but may, as well as the other, be overcome by long-continued, prudent, and unremitted exertion.

The children of the honest and industrious poor, and of persons in moderate circumstances, are usually taught economy from necessity ; in most instances, however, not so thoroughly and happily as ought to be wished. The children of opulent parents, and of the idle poor, are to a great extent sadly neglected, as to this necessary part of their education. The consequence is, that the children of the one are kept poor, and the children of the other frequently reduced to poverty. Economy is at least as necessary to prosperity, even in a moderate degree, as industry itself. Equally necessary is it to furnish us the power of doing justice to others ; safety from temptations to fraud, falsehood, and innumerable other evils ; support in sickness, and old age ; the education, and comfortable settlement, of our families ; and a host of other blessings. It is therefore an indispensable duty ; and is made such by the example and precept of our Saviour. When he had fed a multitude by a creative act of his own, he directed his disciples to ‘gather up the fragments, that nothing might be lost.’ What was their duty, in such a case, is certainly the duty of all men, in

all cases: and, however it may be despised by the proud and the prodigal, or however forgotten by the thoughtless, will be found of incalculable importance to their children.

At the same time, they should be carefully guarded against all tendencies to covetousness, and to every other exercise of a mean and narrow mind. Economy furnishes us with the ability to perform generous acts. Meanness prevents their existence, and destroys the spirit from which they spring. Meanness also roots up, in whatever form it may exist, all the tendencies to virtue; every stem on which it may be hopefully grafted.

Another thing which ought to be cultivated with great care in the early minds of children, and which may be properly ranged under this head, is *the exercise of the gentle affections*. Violent affections seem to be the chief preventives of virtue, and its chief enemies. Gentle affections are the best preparation for it, and the best friends to it, which are furnished by human nature. All the affections of virtue are *ordinarily* gentle, the most amiable ones *always*. This is probably one powerful reason why so many more Christians are usually found in the female sex than in ours; *viz.* that the softness and sweetness of their affections naturally coincide with religious impressions, while the violence of ours naturally resists them. Children should regularly be checked and subdued in every ebullition of passion; particularly of pride and anger. Nor should they be less carefully opposed in the more unobserved progress of avarice and ambition. The mischiefs of all these, and of all other inordinate passions are known and acknowledged by all men. It will be only necessary to remark concerning them here, that, while they continue in full strength, they absolutely forbid all access of religion, and fix the mind in immoveable hostility to the divine pleasure. He who wishes his children to become the subjects of piety, should make it a prime object in their education to check all their inordinate passions with an efficacy of resistance, pro-

portioned to the demands of each case ; and should, with equal anxiety, teach them to check, restrain, and subdue themselves. Usually, this work may in early childhood be easily done ; but unhappily is too often neglected. The passions in the mind, like weeds in a garden, sufficiently tender and feeble at first, soon strengthen themselves to such a degree by rankness of growth, that to subdue them becomes difficult, if not impossible. Few persons have then sufficient resolution to undertake the task ; fewer have sufficient perseverance to execute it. When begun in season it is ordinarily attended with little difficulty.

Gentle affections should be encouraged in children by all the means in our power. They should constantly witness them in us. The exercise of them in themselves should from time to time be commended ; the amiableness of them explained and enforced. Companions, possessed of such affections, should be selected for them ; and books, containing persuasive examples and illustrations of this character, should be put into their hands.

Intimately connected with this subject is *civility and sweetness of manners*. Lord Chesterfield justly observes, that such manners are directly required by our Saviour's practical exposition of the second great command of the moral law : ' That we should do to others whatsoever we would that they should do to us.' All men love to be *treated* with civility, and are bound, therefore, by the law of God to exhibit such treatment to others. The Chinese proverbially and justly observe, that a man without civility is a man without common sense. Such manners are the proper polish of that most beautiful of all diamonds, virtue ; and enable it to shine with its own peculiar lustre. They render the character lovely, increase exceedingly the power of those who possess them to do good, and secure to them a thousand kind offices, to which coarse, rough, and brutal men are utterly strangers. Children, in order to be taught such manners, beside being particularly instructed in

their nature, should especially be accustomed to the company of those from whom they may be successfully copied.

There is scarcely a fault to which children are prone which is more difficult to be prevented, than *the imprudence of the tongue*. Passion prompts them to expressions of rashness and violence; example, to profaneness; the love of being listened to, to the betraying of secrets, the telling of marvellous stories, the recitation of private history, and the utterance of slander. In these and other similar ways they often wound their own character, and the peace both of themselves and their connexions. Every attempt of every such kind ought to be repelled at once, and effectually crushed. Neglect here is countenance; inattention, encouragement. What then shall be said of parents, who directly listen to their children while thus employed; and in this manner solicit them to transgress? Few evils need to be more steadily watched, or more powerfully resisted, than this. A prudent and well-governed tongue is an invaluable possession, whether we consider the peace of the possessor, the comfort of his family, or the quietness of his neighbourhood. 'A busy-body in other men's matters' is classed by St. Peter with 'murderers, thieves, and malefactors.'

Universally, children should be *guarded*, and taught to *guard themselves* with the utmost care, *against temptations*. They should be cautioned not to go, and restrained from going, to places of evil resort. They should be anxiously prevented from the company of wicked children; and, as much as may be, from that of all other persons from whom they will hear dangerous sentiments, or who will set before them dangerous conduct. They should also be never brought, when it can be avoided, into contact with dangerous and fascinating objects. From such objects indeed, and from such company, they cannot be entirely secluded in such a world as this. By watchful and faithful parents, however, much may be done; it is impossible to say how much; but pro-

bably so much as, in ordinary cases at least, perhaps in all, to secure the child from the evil to which he is exposed. One important mean of security, never to be forgotten, is an early, strong, and habitual impression of their exposure to temptation, accompanied by explicit and thorough information of the evils which will certainly result from yielding to its influence. This will prove a safeguard to the child, when the parent cannot be present to warn him of his danger.

It will be remembered, that I originally proposed to mention a part only of those things which are to be taught to children. Those which have been mentioned are, if I mistake not, possessed of distinguished importance; and will, I suppose, be acknowledged to claim a primary place in parental instruction. I shall now proceed to consider *the manner in which they should be taught.*

1. *The instruction of children should be begun in very early life.*

Very young children are capable of learning many things of incalculable importance to themselves. All parents appear to me to labour under serious mistakes with regard to this subject; and begin to teach their children many things, at least, at a later period than that in which *they* would advantageously begin to receive them. The infant mind opens faster than we are apt to be aware. This is the true reason why very young children are almost always thought peculiarly bright and promising. We customarily attribute this opinion to parental fondness; in some degree, perhaps, justly; but it arises extensively from the fact, that the intellect of little children outruns in its progress our utmost expectations: the goodness of God intending, I suppose, to provide by this constitution of things the means of receiving the instruction, so indispensable to children at that period. Of this advantage every parent should carefully avail himself. At the same time he should remember, that this is the season for making lasting impressions. The infant mind lays strong hold of every

thing which it is taught. Both its understanding and affections are then unoccupied. The affections are then also remarkably susceptible, tender, and vigorous. Every person knows the peculiarly impressive power of novelty. On the infant mind every thing is powerfully impressed, because every thing is new. From these causes is derived that remarkable fact, so commonly observed, that early impressions influence the character and the life beyond all others ; and remain strong and vivid after most others are worn away.

From these remarks must be seen, with irresistible evidence, the immense importance of seizing this happy period to make religious impressions on the minds of our offspring. He, who loses this season, is a husbandman, who wastes the spring in idleness, and sows in midsummer. How can such a man rationally expect a crop ? To the efforts of the parent at this period the professed instructor is bound to add his own. The instructor, who in a school, a college, or a university, does not employ the opportunities which he enjoys of making religious impressions on the minds of his pupils, neglects a prime part of his duty ; and so far wraps his talent in a napkin, and buries it in the earth.

2. *Children should be gradually instructed.*

Knowledge plainly should be communicated in that progressive course in which the mind is most capable of receiving it. The first things which children attain are *words* and *facts*. To these succeed, after no great interval, *plain doctrines* and *precepts*. As they advance in years and understanding, they gradually comprehend, and therefore relish, doctrines of a more complicated and difficult nature. This order of things, being inwrought in the constitution of the human mind, should be exactly followed. When it is counteracted, or forgotten, the task of instruction will ever be difficult ; and the progress of the pupil, slow and discouraging. A loose and general attention to this great rule of instruction seems to have prevailed in most enlightened coun-

ries, but a far less accurate one than its importance deserves.

Among the facts and doctrines suited to the early mind, none are imbibed with more readiness, or fastened upon with more strength, than the existence, presence, perfections, and providence of God the creation of all things by his power ; its own accountableness to him ; and the immense importance of his favour, and therefore of acting in such a manner as to obtain his approbation. These things then, together with such as are inseparably connected with them, should, without fail, be always taught at the dawn of the understanding.

3. *The impressions which are useful to children should be made continually.*

Children, more than any other persons, need 'line upon line, and precept upon precept ; here a little, and there a little.' It is in no sense sufficient to have taught them either truths or duties. The parent's duty is *then* only begun. He is not only to teach, but to inculcate ; to recall what has been forgotten, to explain what has been imperfectly apprehended, to rectify what has been misunderstood, to illustrate what has been obscure, and to enforce what has been unfelt. A few minds are indeed so happily susceptible, as readily to understand, deeply to feel, and permanently to retain, most of that which they are taught. But such minds are rare and solitary. Almost all children demand, and ought to receive, instruction in the manner here recommended.

4. *Instruction should be communicated to children with unwearied patience.*

Christ, in this and many other respects, has left instructors a perfect example. Although his disciples were 'dull of hearing,' and 'slow of heart to believe ;' although they had many, and those often very unreasonable prejudices ; his patience was never lessened. He taught them in the gradual manner which I have recommended ; 'as,' in his own language, 'they were able to bear.' He taught them also without weariness, without fretfulness,

without discouragement, without reproaches, and without intermission. At times indeed he reproved them, and with some degree of severity, but always with tenderness and good-will.

In this manner should parents teach their children; should be patient with their ignorance, their backwardness to receive instruction, their mistakes, their forgetfulness, the necessity of teaching them again and again, and the doubts and difficulties which from time to time they suggest. In all this, the parents should manifest not only quietness of mind, but cheerfulness and willingness to repeat their instructions.

5. Instructions should be given persuasively.

Children are often discouraged from learning by being compelled to this employment, and punished for not learning; by the gloomy countenance, morose temper, and forbidding manners of the instructor, by being unreasonably confined, and unreasonably debarred from those harmless gratifications which are necessary to preserve their health and spirits, and not unfrequently by the imposition of harder tasks than they are able to perform. If I supposed such persons to act understandingly, I should believe that they intended to prevent children from learning, and that their measures were skilfully contrived for this purpose. But to the end for which they professedly adopted, they could scarcely be fitted in a more unhappy manner.

To most children learning may be made an alluring object. Pleasantness of disposition, affability, condescension, serenity of countenance, and sweetness of manners, in the instructor; engaging books, moderate tasks, reasonable confinement to study, a proper allowance of recreation, commendation kindly given when merited, and well-directed rewards for improvement, are usually sufficient persuasives to engage children in a spontaneous and pleasurable course of learning. The instructor who will not follow this course must be very imperfectly fitted for his employment.

6. *Children should be taught by example.*

All men will admit that the moral branches of education can never be taught successfully without the aid of example. Example has, in a great measure, the same influence on every other part of education. Children do little, beside *imitating others*. Parents who read will have reading children. Industrious parents will have industrious children. Lying parents will have lying children. Example, therefore, is of the highest possible consequence in this important concern.

7. *Children should be taught in such a manner, as to be prompted unceasingly to the most vigorous exertion of their own talents.*

The human mind is not a mere vessel, into which knowledge is to be poured. It is better compared to a bee, fed during the first periods of its existence by the labours of others; but intended, ere long, to lift its wings in the active employment of collecting sweets from every field within its reach. To such excursions, and to the accomplishment of such purposes, the mind should be early and sedulously allured. This is the only way to give it energy and strength. Without the active exercise of its powers, neither body nor mind can acquire vigour. Without bodily exertions, Goliath, six cubits high, would have been only a gigantic boy; without mental efforts, Newton would have been merely 'an infant of days.'

SERMON CXII.

THE LAW OF GOD. THE DECALOGUE.

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT.

DUTY OF PARENTS.

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.—PROV. xxii. 6.

IN the preceding Discourse I distributed the duties of parents under three heads :

The maintenance ;

The education ;

The settlement of children.

The *education* of children I proposed also to consider under the two heads of *instruction* and *government*.

The first of these general heads, together with the former division of the second, were examined in that Discourse. I shall now proceed to make some observations on the remaining subjects proposed for discussion at that time.

The parental duty which, according to the plan mentioned, next demands our attention, is the *government* of children. The observations which I shall make concerning this subject, will respect,

The *nature*, the *end*, and the *importance* of this government ; and the *manner in which it is to be administered*.

Concerning the *nature* of parental government, its *end*, and its *importance*, my observations must be very summary.

The nature of all government is justly defined to be the control of one being over the actions of another. This controul in the hands of parents over their children, is at once the most absolute perhaps, and clearly the most gentle and indulgent dominion which is exercised by mankind. The parent's will is the only law to the child ; yet, being steadily re-

gulated by parental affection, is probably more moderate, equitable, and pleasing to him, than any other human government to any other subject. It resembles the divine government more in its nature, and, when wisely administered, in its efficacy, than any other. Correction, sometimes esteemed the whole of it, is usually the least part; a part, indispensable indeed, and sometimes efficacious, when all others have failed. Beside correction, it includes advice, commendation, blame, reproof, rebuke, admonition, exhortation, influence, restraint, confinement, rewards, the deprivation of enjoyments, the infliction of disgrace, the denial of favour, and various other things; each possessing peculiar efficacy; and all of them efficacious, not only in themselves, but also by the variety of administration which they furnish, and the relative power which they derive merely from the fact of succeeding each other.

The *end* of parental government is undoubtedly the *good of children*. The end of all government is the good of the governed. Children are given to parents, not to be a convenience to *them*, but that *they* may become blessings to the children. In this way, and ordinarily in this alone, will the children become blessings to the parents. Every parent should fix in his mind a strong, habitual sense of this end. The good to be accomplished for the child, should be the object of inquiry in every administration of this nature. The kind, the degree, and the continuance of the punishment, and the reward, should be all determined by it. In a word, it should absolutely govern all the conduct of the parent towards the child.

The *importance* of parental government will demand very few remarks, since no man will question it in earnest. Every parent ought to remember, that his child is committed to *him*; that all his interests are put into his hands; and that to train up his family for usefulness, and for heaven, is ordinarily the chief duty which God requires him to perform; the chief good which he can ever accomplish. If he neglects this duty, he ought to expect that it

will be left undone : for no other person will usually undertake it. If *he* does not accomplish this good, *he* ought to believe that it will never be accomplished. On the contrary, the child will be left to himself, to evil companions, to men whose business it is to corrupt the young, to unbridled lusts, to unrestrained iniquity, to Satan and to ruin. He ought also to remember that childhood is the seed-time for all good, the season when every useful impression is most happily made ; the time when almost all that which can be done for the child, is to be done. He should remember, that the encouragement is very great. Experience abundantly proves that well governed children are almost always well behaved, and that almost all religious persons are of this number. What experience declares, the Scriptures ratify. The text, if not an absolute promise, is yet a glorious encouragement to this parental duty. In the mean time, the peace and pleasantness of his family, the filial piety, amiable conduct, and fair reputation of his children, furnish a rich hope that he will in the end assemble around him his little flock, and be able to say with exultation and transport, ' Behold, here am I, and the children whom thou hast given me.'

The *manner* in which parental government ought to be administered, demands a more extensive consideration.

The observations which I propose to make concerning it, I shall arrange under the following heads:

1. *The government of children should begin with the dawn of their reason.*

I have already applied this observation to *parental instruction* ; it is still more forcibly applicable to *parental government*. The habit of submission can never be effectuated without difficulty, unless commenced at the beginning. The first direction of the infant mind has been often and justly compared to the first figure assumed by a twig, which is ordinarily its figure during every subsequent period of its growth. If children are taught effectually to ob-

at first, they will easily be induced to obey ever afterwards. Almost all those who are disobedient are such as have been neglected in the beginning. The twig was suffered to stiffen, before an attempt was made to bend it into the proper shape. Then it resumed, as soon as the pressure ceased, its former figure. If begun in season, the task of securing filial obedience will usually be easy, and the object effectually gained. If then neglected, it will be attended by a multitude of difficulties and discouragements, and its efficacy will be doubtful, if not fruitless.

2. *Parental government should be administered with constancy.*

The views manifested by the parent concerning the conduct of the child, should ever be the same. His good conduct should be invariably approved, his bad conduct invariably disapproved. The measures of the parent also should be universally of the same tenor. All proper encouragement should be regularly holden out to obedience, and all rational opposition be steadily made to disobedience.

The active superintendence of the child should be unremitted. He should feel that he is ever an object of parental attention; ever secure, when his behaviour merits it, of parental favour; and ever conscious that his faults will expose him to frowns and censures. This unremitted consciousness of the child can never be produced but by the unremitted care and watchfulness of the parent. The Roman maxim, '*Obsta principiis*'—Resist the beginnings of evil; is in all cases replete with wisdom; but is applicable to no case, perhaps, with such force, as to those of children. All their tendencies should be watched. Every commencement of evil, every tendency towards it, should be observed and resisted.

The efforts of parents in this employment should also be unwearied. Discouragement and sloth are two prime evils in the conduct of parental government. The parent seeing so many and so unceasing exertions necessary for the accomplishment of his purpose, usually feels, either earlier or later, as if it

could never be accomplished ; and hence, from mere discouragement, at first relaxes, and finally gives over, his endeavours. Frequently, also, he becomes, after a moderate number of trials, wearied of a duty which he finds so burdensome, and through mere indolence desists from every strenuous attempt to discharge it. Such parents ought to remember, that they are labouring for the salvation of their children ; that this mighty object is pre-eminently committed to *them* ; and that these reasons for their negligence will be unhappily alleged at the final day.

I have elsewhere compared the mind of a child to a rude mass of silver in the hand of the silversmith. A single stroke of the hammer, a hundred, or even a thousand, change its form in a very imperfect degree, and advance it but little towards the figure and beauty of the vessel which is intended. Were he to stop nothing valuable would be accomplished. A patient continuance of these seemingly inefficacious efforts however, will in the end produce the proposed vessel in its proper form, and with the highest elegance and perfection. With the same patience and perseverance should parental exertions be made, when employed in forming the minds of children. Thus made, they will usually find a similar issue.

3. *The government of children should be uniformly kind.*

Parents not unfrequently administer discipline to their children, because they feel themselves obliged to it by conscience, or to gratify anger, or to retaliate some offence, or to compel their children to accomplish some pleasure of their own. Whenever they act under the proper influence of conscience, they are certainly so far to be commended. But whenever they intend merely to unburden their consciences, and feel that this is done by merely punishing their children, whether the punishment be wise, just, and useful, or not, either their consciences must be very well informed, or *they* must be very little inclined to satisfy their demands. In the other three cases the discipline is merely selfish ; and partakes

as little of the true nature of family government, as that of a den of thieves. There are parents who frankly but foolishly declare, that they cannot correct their children unless when they are in a *passion*. Such parents I should advise never to correct them at all. Children, even at an early age, usually understand the nature of such government, and indeed almost always discern more perfectly the nature of our improper conduct than we either wish or suspect. He who thinks his child incapable of understanding his open infirmities, will almost of course be deceived. The government of *passion* children will always perceive to be causeless, variable, weak, and sinful. The parent who administers it will be dreaded by them, indeed; but he will only be dreaded in the same manner as a wild beast. He will neither be revered nor loved. His commands, so far as they cannot be avoided without danger, will be followed by obedience; so far as they can, they will be neglected. The obedience will be a mere eye-service, and never spring from the heart. When the parent is absent, therefore, the child will pursue his own inclinations; and will generally counteract his parent's pleasure, whenever his own safety will permit. Such a government prompts the wickedness of children ten times, where it restrains it once.

The government of *retaliation* is the government of revenge; and, therefore, not the government of a parent, but that of an enemy. In this manner it will be regularly regarded by the child. Accordingly, he will, as far as possible, prevent its effects by concealing his faults, in every way which his ingenuity or circumstances can suggest. In pursuit of this object, he will practise every trick, and fetch, and fraud, which his cunning can devise, and ultimately utter every equivocation, and every direct falsehood, which the necessity of extricating himself may require. Nor will it be long before he will consider his parent as one party, and himself as the other. He will then begin to retaliate in turn. In this manner a controversy will be instituted, in

which it will be the business of each to provoke and injure the other. The child will not, indeed, be able to meet his antagonist in the open field ; but he will endeavour to supply this defect by watching every opportunity to do mischief secretly, and by making up in cunning what he wants in power. A species of Indian hostilities will thus be carried on by him, and frequently for such a length of time, as to imperil the peace of the parent, and to ruin the character of the child.

The government which is employed merely in making a child *subservient to the caprice and convenience of a parent*, is too obviously selfish and sordid ever to be misunderstood ; and it needs only to be understood, to be detested. From parents certainly, if from any human beings, we look for disinterestedness ; especially in the management of their children. But there are parents who regard their children as hard masters regard their slaves ; and value them only as they hope to derive profit from their labour, or convenience from their subserviency to their selfish wishes. No words are necessary to show that such views, feelings, and conduct, are contradictions to the parental character and duties alike. Equally hostile are they to the good of the child, and are calculated only to destroy all his tendencies towards becoming a useful man. Persons who act in either of these modes, have never set before their eyes the true *end* of parental government, and have no conceptions of the real nature of that great duty to which they have been called by their Maker. A little attention to this subject would convince them, that all their government is to be administered under the controlling influence of kindness only, kindness directed solely to the good of their children. They are indeed to reprove and to punish them ; but this is to be done only for their good, and never to gratify the resentment, nor to promote the selfish purposes of the parent. It is to be done, because their faults are to be repressed, and because these are the proper means of repressing them ; because it is neces-



sary that the children should be sober, discreet, virtuous, and useful ; and because these are the proper means of preparing them to become so. As such means only is all discipline to be used. In every other view the nature of discipline is subverted. Reproof becomes reproach, advice contumely, and correction an assault. Instead of rendering the child what he ought to be, the parent will in this way destroy all the worth which he at present possesses, and prevent that which he might acquire.

Among the modes of exhibiting kindness in governing our children, *calmness and moderation in re-proving and correcting* are indispensable. He to whom this office falls, ought, more than in almost any other case, to be in perfect possession of himself. Every thing which he does or says ought to prove that he is so. His countenance ought then to be mild, his accent gentle, his words free from all unkindness, and his conduct such as to prove that he is compelled to this unwelcome office by duty only.

With this spirit, parents will naturally be led *not to govern their children too much*. Like certain Mohammedans, who estimate the degree of their devotion by the number of prayers which they utter, some persons suppose their duty of governing their children to be performed meritoriously, merely because they reprove and punish their children very often ; and accordingly make it their business to find fault with them from morning to night, and to punish them from week to week. In this way both reproof and punishment lose all their power, and only serve to case-harden the child against his duty. Children are as easily injured by too much government, as by too little. Children ought always to be watched with attention and tenderness, but not to be harassed.

Another important office of kindness is to administer reproof and punishment *privately*. Children sometimes commit their faults before others, when the parent is present ; and necessity may then demand that they should be reproved on the spot, and in the presence of those who witness the fault.

Whenever this is not the case, it will, in almost every instance, be desirable to administer the proper discipline in private. In this case the child will feel that his character is saved; and will be solicitous, in future, to preserve his own character by good conduct. He will feel also, that he is treated kindly, and will be grateful for the kindness. His mind will be left free for the undivided exercise of veneration for his parent. The parent, at the same time, will enjoy the best possible opportunity for reproving him freely, largely, pungently, and solemnly; without that embarrassment which will necessarily arise from the presence of others. In the presence of others the child will feel his pride wounded, his character sacrificed, and himself disgraced; and all this without any visible necessity. He will, therefore, be angry, stubborn, pert, and not improbably disposed to repeat his former faults, and to perpetrate others. These emotions, and these designs, he will, not unnaturally, disclose to his companions; and they, not less unnaturally, will enhance and encourage them. Thus the whole force of the parental administration will always be weakened, and most frequently destroyed.

4. *The government of children should always be accompanied by proofs of its reasonableness and equity.*

Many parents err through too much indulgence, and many through too little. Both extremes are unhappy, as well as unreasonable. Every child ought clearly to see that his parent's censures are not unkind, and that his indulgence is not foolish. To this end, he ought regularly, as soon as his capacity will admit, to be taught the reasons on which the conduct of his parent, from time to time, is founded; not as a piece of respect to him, which he may demand; but as wisely directed information, which will be eminently useful to both parent and child. To the parent it will be useful, by establishing his character in the eyes of his child, as a ruler whose measures are all originated and directed by solid reasons and sound wisdom, steady equity and un-

failing kindness ; as a ruler, whose government is to be revered, whose commands are to be obeyed, and whose wishes are to be accorded with, from their reasonableness, as well as their authority ; from the benefit, as well as the duty, of obeying ; and from the pleasure universally experienced in conforming to the will of such a ruler. In this case the parent is secured of the obedience of the child, when he is absent (as for the greater part of the time he must necessarily be), no less than when he is present ; and is assured also, that his obedience will be voluntary, and exact, and, on both these accounts, delightful. To the child this information will be highly advantageous, because it will early accustom him to obey from the reasonableness of obedience ; and will insensibly lead him to examine, feel, and submit to predominating reasons ; not only in cases of filial duty, but in all others. Thus he will habitually grow up to a general accordance with the dictates of reason, and the representations of conscience ; will sustain a far more elevated and desirable character than a child governed by mere authority ; and when absent, abroad, or arrived at the years of self-direction, will be incomparably more safe. The family, in this case, will exhibit the delightful spectacle of rational beings, governed by rational beings ; and not the humiliating one of slaves, struggling under the domination of a master.

5. *The government of children should be self-consistent.*

Every parent ought to possess himself of a *scheme* of governing his children, before he commences the practice. In this scheme the same things should be uniformly aimed at, the same things required, and the same things prohibited. The character of the parent also, as displayed in the execution of this scheme, should invariably be the same ; and that should be the character formed of reason and principle only. In all the parent's measures the child should see, uniformly and irresistibly, that the parent hates vice above all things, and above all things

loves virtue. This hatred to vice, and love to virtue, ought to appear to be inwrought in the very constitution of the parent's mind ; to be inseparable from his habitual views and feelings ; and to be the first, the unvarying, and, as far as may be, the only movements of his soul, with respect to these great subjects. Of course, all his conduct ought to present the unquestionable proof, which practice and example furnish, that this is his real character.

In consequence of this consistency, children will uniformly expect the same parental opposition to their faults, and the same countenance to their virtuous conduct. Few motives will operate more powerfully than such expectations, either to persuade them to virtue, or to restrain them from sin. Fewer crimes will, therefore, be committed by them ; and, of course, the parent will have fewer transgressions to reprove or punish. In this manner a great part of the parent's labour will be prevented, and not a small part of his pain. What remains to be done will be incomparably more pleasant. His encouragement to proceed will, also, be unspeakably greater. To see the efficacy of our endeavours is the most animating of all earthly inducements to continue them.

Besides children will, in this case, regard their parents with far more veneration than in any other. Consistency of character is essential to all dignity. A changing man, even when not a faulty one, is almost necessarily regarded as a trifler. A man, on the contrary, exhibiting uniform views and principles, in a life uniformly directed by them, governed and governing by the same rules, and an unchanging regard to them, is always possessed of dignity ; and, when seen to be steadily opposed to sin and folly, and attached to wisdom and virtue, is possessed of high dignity. This character, seen in a parent, will invariably engage the highest filial veneration.

When children become satisfied that the restraints and corrections which they experience from their parents spring only from a conviction that they are

right and necessary, their consciences will almost always acquiesce. What is remarkable, and would, were it not common, be surprising, they love the parent who administers them, much more than him who neglects them. Between parental government conducted in this manner, and that which is passionate, desultory, and fraught with inconsistencies, the difference can scarcely be calculated.

As a general conclusion of my observations concerning the education of children, I add, that all the efforts of the parent ought to be accompanied with *daily prayer to God for his blessing*. It is the indispensable duty of mankind to 'pray always, with all prayer.' Few, very few, are those employments in human life which so loudly call for the faithful performance of this duty as that which has been under discussion. Wisdom, patience, faithfulness, kindness, and constancy, are rarely demanded of man in any concern, either so unceasingly, or in so great a degree, as in this. All these qualifications are indispensable to our success; and we need them indispensably from 'the Father of lights,' who alone can furnish these and all other 'good gifts.' If we possessed them all, we should equally need his blessing to give an efficacious and happy issue to our exertions. Both the qualifications and the blessing, then, are to be 'asked of God, who giveth liberally unto all;' and who hath assured us, that 'every one, who asketh, shall receive.' The parent who educates his children with the greatest care, and yet fails to invoke the blessing of God upon his labours, has done but half his duty, and is entitled to no promise of success.

III. *I shall now make a few observations concerning the settlement of children.*

The parent's duty with respect to this subject will be principally concerned with the following things:—

1. *The choice of that business in which he is to spend principally his life.*

In selecting this object, a parent is bound to regard the state of his own circumstances, the reason-

able expectations of his child, his talents, his inclinations, the probability of his obtaining a competent subsistence, the prospect of his usefulness, and the security of his virtue. It will be easily seen, that all these are discretionary things ; to be judged of as well as we are able, and reducible to no precise general rule. Where children are not peculiarly forward, and parents not peculiarly prejudiced, the advantage of the child will, in ordinary cases, be sufficiently consulted. The principal difficulty here will usually be, to determine how far regard is to be had to his inclinations. A degree of indulgence is always to be given them. When they direct to a prudent and profitable employment, there can be no controversy ; nor when they direct to a dangerous one. All the real perplexity will spring from cases of a doubtful nature. Here the child's inclinations are supposed to lean one way, and the judgment of the parent another. If the parent apprehends the bias of the child to be invincible, it will be both prudent and right to yield his own inclinations ; if not, he may lawfully require the child to make an experiment of the business which *he* has preferred. The child is then bound to submit quietly to the choice of the parent, and to endeavour faithfully to subdue his own opposing inclinations. If, after a fair trial, he finds them unconquerable ; the parent is, in my view, bound to yield the contested point. The happiness of the child ought here to be the commanding object ; and no child can be happy, who is prevented from following the business which he loves, and compelled to pursue that which he hates.

Universally the parent's duty demands of him to place his child, so far as the case will permit, in that employment which, upon the whole, is best ; which will probably be most productive of his comfort, reputation, usefulness, and piety. To some children, on account of their peculiar dispositions, certain employments are sufficiently safe, which for others are to be regarded as eminently dangerous. The business in which children are to be placed, when they

are exposed by their dispositions to peculiar temptations, should, as far as may be, always be such as to counteract their dispositions. The employments which awaken a moderate ambition, and a moderate desire of wealth and pleasure, and which yet disappoint no reasonable expectations of children, are usually preferable to all others. Those of a contrary nature, and those particularly which are expected to produce sudden opulence, and speedy aggrandizement, or which conduct to voluptuousness, are fraught with infinite danger and mischief. 'They that will be rich,' or great, or voluptuous, 'fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, that drown men in destruction.' The love of these things 'is the root of all evil: and those who covet after them, pierce themselves through with many sorrows.' Most parents wish these things for their children; but they 'know not what spirit they are of.' Most parents, also, wish their sons to be geniuses and their daughters to be beauties. How unfounded, how self-deceiving, are all these desires! I do not deny, that many men of high office, and of great wealth, men who have possessed in abundance all those which are called the enjoyments of life, have been pious; and, so far as this world permits, happy. I do not deny, that such has been the character and state of many men remarkable for their talents, and of many women distinguished for their beauty. I do not deny, that all these things are, in their nature, to be regarded as blessings; or that they sometimes are actually blessings. But to most of mankind they are plainly curses; and probably to all who ardently desire them. What a melancholy history would the whole history be of beauties, geniuses, and men in high office, of great wealth, and determined sensuality!

2. Marriage.

With respect to this subject, children are usually governed by inclination only, or chiefly; their parents sometimes by judgment, sometimes by avarice, sometimes by ambition, sometimes by hatred to the fa-

mily or person with whom the child is intended to be connected, and sometimes by favouritism for other persons or families. The parent ought to be influenced by his unbiassed judgment only. By every thing else he will, without suspecting it, be deceived, and sometimes, in a degree which can neither be foreseen nor limited, render both himself and his child unhappy through life.

Parents can never lawfully compel their children to marry persons who are objects of their dislike, nor use at all for such a purpose that influence or those persuasives which operate upon tender and susceptible minds as the worst kind of compulsion. The reasons are plain. The child would be made miserable, and could not, in any event, without a prevarication of the same nature with perjury, take upon himself the marriage vows. But, during the minority of his children, he may be required by indispensable duty to restrain them from marrying, in certain cases. This, however, is an extreme exercise of authority; and should take place only where the cases are extreme; cases, for example, in which the intended partner is an infidel, or grossly vicious, or of a family scandalous for vice, or in some other case of a similar importance. In all inferior cases, the parent's duty is, in my view, confined to information; to persuasion, kindly and reasonably conducted; and to such delays of the intended connexion as will furnish opportunity to give these dissuasives their full operation. In these cases, children are bound to listen with the utmost willingness and impartiality to the parent's reasons, and deeply to feel and to respect his pleasure. If the reasons are solid, they ought to be influenced by their whole force, and, as far as may be, to overcome their own inclinations; remembering that, although their own happiness is the *first* thing to be regarded in forming such a connexion, that of their parents is the *second*, and that parental opposition to their wishes can rarely aim at any thing but their own good. When children have used all reasonable expedients to bend

their inclinations to the wishes of their parents, and are yet unable to subdue them, their non-compliance can lawfully neither be punished, nor re-sented.

3. *Assistance towards acquiring a competent living.*

When children commence their settlement in life, they often need assistance, at least as much as in earlier periods. This assistance, is, however, principally confined to two articles; giving advice, and furnishing pecuniary aid. All parents, perhaps, are sufficiently willing to give advice; and most, I believe, are willing to befriend their children with pecuniary assistance in such a degree as is not felt to be inconvenient to themselves. There are those, however, who impart sparingly enough; and there are others still who are disposed to give little or nothing. Avarice sometimes influences the parent's conduct in this respect; and oftener, I believe, a reluctance to lessen the heap which we have been long gathering, and oftener still the wound which pride feels at being thought to possess less wealth than the utmost of what we have amassed. These are always wretched reasons, and in this case reasons for wretched conduct. A child when setting out in the world finds himself surrounded by a multitude of difficulties, to struggle with which he must be very imperfectly prepared. Inexperienced, alone, suddenly plunged into many perplexities, and unacquainted with the means of relieving themselves children are often distressed, discouraged, and sometimes broken down; when the helping hand of a parent would, with no real inconvenience to himself, raise them to hope, resolution, and comfort. That parents so situated are bound by plain duty to assist their children in these circumstances can need no proof. He who will not thus relieve the offspring of his own bowels, even at the expense of being thought rich, or of being actually less rich, deserves not the name of a parent, and ought to be ashamed to shew his face among those who do. For my own part, I cannot conceive that a man who will not

deny himself a little to befriend his own children, can have ever compassed the self-denial of forgiving his enemies ; nor understand how he can possess sufficient confidence to stand up in morning and evening worship, at the head of his family, and say, in his own name and theirs, ‘ Our Father, who art in heaven ’

SERMON CXIII.

THE LAW OF GOD. THE DECALOGUE.

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT.

DUTY OF RULERS.

Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.—EXOD. XX. 12.

BESIDE the direct import of this precept, it has been generally and justly considered as, by a very obvious analogy, including those duties which are reciprocally to be rendered by men in various other relations ; particularly those of superiors and inferiors, whatever may be the bias of their relative characters. To an examination of all these duties it might fairly lead. I shall, however, make it my guide to the investigation of one class of them only : viz. *The duties of magistrates and subjects,*

The relations of magistrate and subject are so obviously analogous to those of parents and children, that magistrates have been often styled the *fathers* of their people ; and their people often called their *children*. No language of commendation is with more frequency, or with more emphasis, applied to a prince distinguished for his wisdom, justice, and benevolence, than that ‘ he was a *father* to his subjects.’ In this manner mankind have acknowledged

the similarity of these relations ; and from a similarity of relations, every man knows, must arise a similarity of duties. Accordingly, the duty to magistrates is enjoined in the very same terms, as that which is owed to parents.

‘ Fear God,’ says St. Peter ; ‘ honour the king. We are also directed by St. Paul to render ‘ reverence, honour, custom, and tribute,’ to the several orders of magistracy, as from time to time they are due.

It is my design in this Discourse to state, in a summary manner, *the nature of civil government ; and the respective duties of rulers and subjects.* This I shall do without even a remote reference either to the past or present state of our own government. I never preached what is commonly called a political sermon, on the sabbath, in my life : and I shall not begin now ; although to preach such sermons is unquestionably the right, and in certain cases as unquestionably the duty, of every minister of the gospel. All that I shall attempt to perform is to exhibit some of the primary principles and duties which pertain to government, as a branch of moral science. The knowledge of these is in some degree necessary to every man, who wishes to discharge either the duties of a ruler, or those of a subject.

The *foundation* of all government is undoubtedly, *the will of God.* Government, since the days of Mr. Locke, has been extensively supposed to be founded in the *social compact.* No opinion is more groundless than this. The great man whom I have mentioned was probably led to adopt it, from his zeal to oppose the ridiculous whims of Sir Robert Filmer ; who taught, that kings had a *divine hereditary right* to their thrones, *by virtue of the original gift of universal dominion to Adam.* In opposing this monstrous absurdity, Mr. Locke fell into another, not a whit more rational, or defensible. This doctrine supposes that mankind were originally without any government ; and that in an absolute state of nature they voluntarily came together, for the purpose of constituting

a body politic, creating rulers, prescribing their functions, and making laws directing their own civil duties. it supposes, that they entered into grave and philosophic deliberations ; individually consented to be bound by the will of the majority ; and cheerfully gave up the wild life of savage liberty for restraints which, however necessary and useful, no savage could ever brook even for a day. Antecedently to such an assembly, and its decisions, this doctrine supposes, that men have no civil rights, obligations, or duties ; and, of course, that those who do not consent to be bound by such a compact are now not the subjects of either ; such a compact, in the apprehension of the abettors of this doctrine, being that which creates all the civil rights, obligations, and duties of man.

The absurdities of this doctrine are endless. He who knows any thing of the nature of savages, knows perfectly, that *no savage was ever capable of forming such a design* ; and that civilized life is indispensably necessary to the very perception of the things pre-supposed by this doctrine, and absolutely pre-requisite to the very existence of such an assembly. Every one acquainted at all with savages, knows equally well that, if they were capable of all this comprehension, *nothing short of omnipotence could persuade them to embrace such a scheme of conduct*. There is nothing which a savage hates more than the restraints of civilized life ; nothing which he despises more than the civilized character, its refinements, its improvements, nay, its very enjoyments. To have formed such an assembly, or even to have proposed such a system, men must have already been long governed and civilized.

At the same time, there is no fact more clearly evinced by the history of man, than that *such a compact never existed*. This even the abettors of it are obliged to confess ; and this cuts up the doctrine by the roots. For, if the social compact was not a fact, it is nothing.

But it is alleged, that, *although this compact was*

never an express one, it may still be fairly considered as a tacit and implied compact. To the very existence of a compact it is indispensable, that the contracting party should be conscious that the subject of the compact is proposed to him for his deliberation, choice, and consent; and that he does actually deliberate, choose, and consent. But there is not even the shadow of a pretence, that any man, considering himself as being in a state of nature, and subject to no civil government, was ever conscious of being invited to become a party to such a compact, and of having this question ever proposed to him for such deliberation, or such consent. There is, therefore, as little foundation for the supposition of a tacit, as for that of an express, social compact.

It is farther alleged, that *this scheme, although confessedly imaginary, may yet be advantageously employed to illustrate the nature of civil government.* In answer to this allegation, I shall only observe, that the philosopher who believes falsehood to be necessary or useful to the illustration of truth, must be very hardly driven by his own weakness, or by the erroneousness of his system.

If it were indeed true, that government is thus founded, then these fatal consequences would follow:

Every despotism on earth must stand as long as the world continues. Every subject of despotic power is by this doctrine supposed to promise his obedience to it; and no man can ever withdraw himself from the obligation of his own promise. A new government can never upon this scheme be substituted for a former, but by the choice of the majority of those who are subject to it; and, as men come into the world, there never can be in any country a majority of inhabitants who have not already promised obedience to the existing government. A minority, therefore, must always comprise the whole number of those who can lawfully act in the business of modelling the government anew. Nor could even these act in concert without being guilty of rebellion. Nor could those who had already promised obedience be re-

leased from their promise. If, therefore, a new government were to be constituted, there must be two sets of inhabitants, every where intermingled throughout such a country, and obeying two distinct and hostile governments.

If any man in any country declines his consent to the compact, he is under no obligation to obey the existing government. Personal consent, according to this scheme, is all that constitutes such obligation. Such a man may therefore fix himself in a state of nature. If he attacks others, indeed, they may attack him in turn ; but the government cannot lawfully meddle with him, nor with his concerns.

If the ruler should violate any, even the least, part of his own engagements, then the subjects are released from their engagements, and of course from all obligation to obey the laws. In other words, from the least violation of the ruler's engagements, a state of anarchy lawfully and necessarily ensues. If the subjects pass by such violation in silence, their consent to it is equally implied with their supposed original compact. Of course, the ruler may lawfully commit the same violation again as often as he pleases ; nor can the subjects lawfully complain, because they have consented to it in the same manner as to the pre-existing government. Every such violation, therefore, which is not openly resisted, is finally sanctioned.

On the other hand, if a subject violate any of his engagements, however small, the ruler may lawfully make him an outlaw ; and deprive him of every privilege which he holds as a citizen.

A foreigner passing through such a country, can be under no obligation to obey its laws ; and, if he does any thing which may be construed as an outrage, must either be suffered to do it with impunity, or must be attacked by private violence. Such attacks, a few times repeated, would convert any people into a horde of robbers.

No man could in such a government be punished with death, however enormous might be his crimes ; because

no man ever thought of making, or has any right to make, a surrender of his own life into the hands of others.

All these, and a multitude of other deplorable consequences follow, irresistibly follow, from the doctrine, that government is founded on the *social compact*.

Government, as I have already remarked, is founded in the will of God. The evidence of this position is complete. That God made mankind in order to make them happy, if they themselves will consent to be so, cannot be questioned. As little can it be questioned, that government is indispensable to their happiness, and to all the human means of it; to the safety of life, liberty, and property; to peace, to order, to useful knowledge, to morals, and to religion. Nay, it is necessary to the very existence of any considerable numbers of mankind. A country without government would speedily, for want of those means of subsistence and comfort, to the existence of which it is indispensable, become an Arabian desert; and that, however fruitful its soil, or salubrious its climate. Mankind have never yet been able to exist for any length of time in a state of anarchy. What reason so completely evinces, the Scriptures decide in the most peremptory manner. 'The powers that be,' says St. Paul, 'are ordained of God:' in other words, *government is an ordinance of God*.

It is not here to be intended, that God has ordained a *given form* of government. This he has never done, except in a single instance. He gave the Israelites a system, substantially of the republican form. This fact may, perhaps, afford a presumption in favour of such a form, wherever it is capable of existing, but can do nothing more. Nothing more is here intended, than that God has *willed the existence of government itself*. He has undoubtedly left it to nations to institute such modes of it, whenever this is in their power, as should best suit their own state of society.

As God willed the existence of government for the happiness of mankind, it is unanswerably cer-

tain that every government is agreeable to his will, just so far as it promotes that happiness; that that government which promotes it most, is most agreeable to his will; and that that government which opposes human happiness is equally opposed to his will. From these undeniable principles both rulers and subjects may easily learn most of their own duty. Whatever is conformed to them is right; whatever is contrary to them is wrong of course. This, it will be remembered, is the dictate both of common sense, and of the Scriptures.

Every ruler is accordingly bound to remember, that he is raised to the chair of magistracy solely for the good of those whom he governs. His own good he is to find in the consciousness of having promoted that of others; and in the support, affection, and respect which they render, and are bound to render, him for discharging this important duty. There is no greater mistake, there is no more anti-scriptural, or contemptible absurdity, than the doctrine of *millions made for one*; of a ruler raised to the chair of magistracy to govern for himself; to receive homage, to roll in splendour, to riot in luxury, to gratify pride, power, and ambition at the expense of the toils and sufferings of his fellow men. *Such a ruler is only a public robber!* Every man in office, however elevated, is bound to remember, as a being equally accountable to God with his fellow-men, that his personal rights are, by the divine constitution and pleasure, the same as those of others; that his personal gratification is of no more importance, and can claim no greater sacrifices, than that of others; that peculation, fraud, falsehood, injustice, oppression, drunkenness, gluttony, lewdness, sloth, profaneness, irreligion, and impiety, in a word, every crime is accompanied by greater guilt in him than in men at large; because of his superior advantages to know, and his superior inducements to perform, his duty. Forsaking all private gratifications, then, so far as they are inconsistent with the public happiness, just so much more important than his, as those who enjoy

it are more numerous, he is required indispensably to see that his government has that happy and glorious influence upon his people, which is described by a man thoroughly versed in this subject, in the following beautiful language: 'The Spirit of the Lord spake by me; and his word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God: and he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.' 2 Sam. xxiii. 2—4.

To possess this beneficent influence—like this glorious luminary, to diffuse light, and warmth, and animation, and happiness, to all around him—a ruler ought,

1. *To be a man of absolute sincerity.*

Of the Ruler of the universe it is said, that 'it is impossible that he should lie.' 'Mercy and truth,' said the wisest ruler that ever lived in this world, 'preserve the king.'—'The lip of truth,' says the same prince, 'shall be established for ever.' 'If truth,' said king John of France, 'were to be banished from the world; it ought still to find a residence in the breast of princes.' On the importance of truth I shall have occasion to dwell hereafter. It ought, however, to be observed here, that truth is the basis on which rest all the natural and moral interests of intelligent beings; that neither virtue nor happiness can exist without it; and that falsehood, generally diffused, would ruin not only a kingdom, or a world, but the universe; would change all rational beings into fiends, and convert heaven itself into a hell.

There are *two kinds* of government; that of *force*, and that of *persuasion*. A government of persuasion is the only moral or free government. A government of force may preserve order in every case which that force can reach; but the order is that of a church-yard, the stillness and quiet of death. The inhabitants of a kingdom governed in this manner, are

tenants of the grave ; moving masses, indeed, of flesh and bones : but the animating principle is gone. The soul is shrivelled, and fled ; and nothing remains but dust and putrefaction.

A government of *persuasion* subsists only in the *mutual confidence of the ruler and the subjects*. But where truth is not, confidence is not. A deceitful ruler is never believed for a moment. If we could suppose him desirous to do good, he would want the power ; for none would trust either his declarations or his promises. The only feelings excited in the minds of the community towards him and his measures, would be jealousy and hatred. Even fools know that upright and benevolent measures not only need no support from falsehood, but are ruined by it. The very connexion of falsehood, therefore, with any measures, proves irresistibly to all men, that the measures themselves are mischievous, and that the author of them is a villain. Where confidence does not exist, voluntary obedience cannot exist. A lying ruler, if his government is to continue, makes force or despotism indispensable to his administration. So sensible are even the most villanous magistrates of these truths, that they leave no measure untried to persuade their subjects, that themselves are men of veracity. Nay, all sagacious despots carefully fulfil their promises to such of their subjects as they think necessary to the support of their domination, and to the success of their measures. Falsehood may, indeed, in the hands of a man of superior cunning, succeed for a time ; but it can never last long : and, whenever detection arrives, it draws after it a terrible train of avengers.

Besides, lying is the most contemptible of all sins. ‘Ye are of your father, the devil,’ said our Saviour to the Jews ; ‘for he was a liar from the beginning, and the father of it.’ This contemptible resemblance to the vilest and most contemptible of all beings, the source of complete debasement to every one who is the subject of it, is pre-eminently contemptible in a ruler. He is, of course, the object both of public

and private scorn. No degradation is more indignantly regarded than that of being governed by a liar.

‘If a ruler hearken to lies,’ says Solomon, ‘all his servants are wicked.’ Such a magistrate will be served by none but profligate men. The evils of his government will therefore spread, by means of his subordinate officers, into every nook and corner of the land. Like the simoom of Nubia, he spreads poison, death, and desolation over the wretched countries subjected to his sway.

2. *A ruler is bound to be a just man.*

‘He that ruleth over men,’ saith God, ‘must be just.’ This, indeed, is united of course with the preceding character. ‘He that speaketh truth,’ saith Solomon, ‘sheweth forth righteousness.’ The importance of justice in government is, like that of truth, inestimable; and, as it respects the divine government, is exhibited with wonderful force in that declaration of Moses, ‘He is the rock;’ that is, the immoveable foundation on which the universe rests. Why? The answer is, ‘His work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment’ (or justice); ‘a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is He.’ On the truth and justice of the Infinite Mind the universe is built, as a house upon a rock. ‘Fiat justitia; ruat cœlum;’ is an adage, proverbially expressing the judgment of common sense concerning this subject. ‘Let justice be done, although heaven itself should tumble into ruin.’

This comprehensive attribute demands,

(1.) *Of the legislator, that he enact just laws.*

Laws are the rules by which rulers themselves, as well as the people at large, are or ought to be governed. If these are unjust, the whole system of administration will be a system of iniquity; and the mass of guilt thus accumulated will rest primarily on the head of the legislator.

(2.) *Of the judge, that all his interpretations of law and all his decisions founded on it, be just.*

‘Woe unto them,’ saith Isaiah, ‘who justify the wicked for a reward, and take away the righteous-

ness of the righteous from him.'—'Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment,' said God to Israel, 'thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty; but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour.'—'It is not good,' says Solomon, 'to have respect of persons in judgment.'—'He that saith unto the wicked (that is, in a judicial sentence), Thou art righteous; him shall people curse: nations shall abhor him. But to them that rebuke him shall be delight; and a good blessing shall come upon them.' Tribunals of justice bring laws to every man's fire-side; and apply them directly to his property, liberty, person, and life. How just soever, how reasonable soever, laws may be, an iniquitous tribunal may prevent all their good effects, and render a country as miserable by its decisions as it could be by the operations of original tyranny in the legislator. When God established the government of Israel, he himself formed the constitution and enacted the laws. All the political evils which that people suffered, therefore, were effectuated by the unjust applications of those laws. They were, however, oppressed, at times, as intensely as the nations who have been under despotic dominion. The guilt and the mischiefs of this oppression are in the Scriptures charged wholly and truly to the judicial and executive magistracy. The same evils in the same degree may be derived to any people from the same sources. A wise and upright judiciary is a public blessing, which no language can adequately exhibit, which no people can too highly prize, and too strenuously vindicate; and without which no people can be safe or happy.

(3.) *Of the executive magistrate, that he execute the laws faithfully, invariably, and exactly.* This is so plain a truth, and so universally acknowledged, as to need no illustration. The end of all legislative and judicial efforts is found here; and, if this great duty is unaccomplished, both legislative and judicial efforts, however wise, and just, and good they may be, are a mere puppet-show.

3. *A ruler must be a benevolent man.*

Of the universal Ruler it is said, 'God is love. Of the same character ought all his earthly delegates to be possessed.

Under the influence of this spirit, infinitely important to the happiness of intelligent beings, rulers are bound to make the public good their sole object in governing. Their own personal interests, compared with the general interest, are a unit to many millions; and are immensely better promoted by securing the common good, than by any possible pursuit of that which is private and selfish. If they think otherwise, it is either because they cannot, or will not, discern the truth.

Under the influence of this spirit also, *he is bound to administer justice with mercy.* In the conduct of such beings as men, there are very many cases in which a rule, generally just, becomes unjust by a rigid application. For these cases wise governments have endeavoured to provide, by intrusting the proper magistrate with a discretionary authority; in the exercise of which, clemency may be extended wherever it may be extended with propriety. Even where a strict application of law is right and necessary, there may be a harshness and unkindness in the manner of application, sometimes scarcely less cruel than injustice in the application itself. A benevolent ruler will never administer government in this manner.

Universally, a *benevolent ruler will prevent, redress, relieve, and remove* the wrongs both of the public and of individuals, as far and as soon as it shall be in his power. He will cast an affectionate eye on all the concerns of his countrymen, and, wherever he sees calamities arise, will kindly interpose with those means of relief which God has placed in his hands. The extensive power of doing good with which he is intrusted by his Creator, he will consider as thus intrusted, only that he may do good; and will feel himself delightfully rewarded by having been selected as the honourable instrument for

accomplishing so glorious a purpose. That all this is demanded by his duty, it is unnecessary even to assert.

4. *A ruler is bound to respect the laws of his country.*

By this I intend, particularly, that he is bound to conform to them in all his conduct, personal and public. The laws of every free country prescribe alike the conduct of the ruler and the ruled. The *official conduct* of all magistrates, whatever be their office, is directed by particular laws. To every one of these, so far as his own duties are marked out by it, each magistrate is bound to conform with absolute exactness; not generally and loosely only, but with respect to every 'jot and tittle.' The *personal conduct* of the ruler is prescribed by the same laws which direct that of his fellow-citizens. These laws, also, it is his duty faithfully and scrupulously to obey: a duty enforced by higher obligations than those which respect men in general; because he is fairly supposed to understand more perfectly the duty and importance of obeying; and because, in violating law, his evil example will weaken the government, and prompt others to the same violation, more than that of any private individual. The ruler, who violates the laws of the land, and yet attempts to compel or persuade others to obey them, labours, with the Danaides, to fill with water a tub full of holes.

Concerning the king, whom God foresaw the Israelites would one day elect to govern them, Moses, by his direction, says to Israel, 'It shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write a copy of this law in a book, out of that which is before the priests, the Levites; and it shall be with him; and he shall read therein all the days of his life; that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law, and these statutes, to do them; that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren; and that he turn not aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, Deut. xvii. 19, 20.

5. *A ruler ought to be a man of piety.*

That a ruler is bound to sustain this character, by all the obligations which are incumbent on other men, will not be questioned. I intend something more. A ruler is under peculiar obligations to sustain this character, beside those which are common to other men. As a private citizen, he was under all the common obligations to sustain this character. As a ruler, he is under new ones. His duties are become more important and arduous ; and demand, in an eminent degree, the blessing of God to enable him to perform them aright. He has greater means of doing good put into his hands, and needs, in a peculiar degree, the divine assistance, to enable him to use them. If he should be left to unwise or wicked measures, they will be far more mischievous to his countrymen, than any thing which he could formerly have done, when he was a private citizen. His personal conduct also cannot fail to be much more beneficial, or much more noxious, to his country, than if he had not been invested with a public character.

In accordance with these observations, the Scriptures inform us, that the rulers of Israel and Judah were eminent blessings, or eminent curses, to the people over which they presided. David, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah, are remarkable examples of the glorious influence which a ruler may possess, towards reforming a nation, and rendering it happy. Jeroboam and Ahab are terrible proofs of the power which a ruler may exert, to change a nation into a horde of profligates. What magistrate, except such as Ahab and Jeroboam, would not covet the character and influence of the four first of these princes ! What man of common sobriety would not shrink with horror from the thought of resembling the two last ! But the four first were men of exemplary piety, while the two last were impious beyond example.

At the same time, God usually blesses a nation for the sake of pious rulers ; whereas an impious one cannot fail to become a curse. But all blessings are given in answer to prayer. ' Ask, and ye shall

receive,' is the only promise of good to man; involving the condition without which it is never promised. If rulers then would obtain blessings either for themselves, or their people, they, like all other men, must pray for them, 'But the sacrifice of the wicked,' and of wicked rulers, as well as of other wicked men, 'is an abomination to the Lord;' while 'the prayer of the upright is his delight.' Which of these men ought we here to suppose that God will answer and bless?

6. *A ruler is bound to become a blessing by his example.*

The character of a good ruler is forcibly and perfectly described by St. Paul, when he styles him 'a minister of God, for good' unto his people. This is his whole business; and, while he pursues it, he is acting in his only proper character. To form this character, every thing which I have mentioned contributes, as an essential part. But every thing which has been said, except what was observed concerning his personal obedience to the laws of the land, and his piety, respects his official duties. The observation now to be illustrated respects his conduct as a man. As a man, he is peculiarly required to be an example of all the Christian virtues. Whatever he does, others will do, because he does it; and many more will imitate him, than if he were a private person. The weight of power, and the splendour of office, give to the example of the ruler, especially in an elevated station, an authority, a persuasiveness, a charm, which fascinates multitudes. If his example be virtuous, it will greatly discountenance and check vice; and greatly encourage, diffuse, and strengthen virtue. If vicious, it will become pestilential; and spread contagion, decay, and death through all around him. No man can be so great a blessing or so great a curse, in this respect, as a ruler; and the example of every man in high office will invariably be either a public curse, or a public blessing. Jeroboam and Ahab were incomprehensible curses to the Israelites,

through every succeeding age of their national existence. What man of common sense, in such an alternative, can balance a moment concerning the choice, which he shall make ?

7. *Every ruler, vested with the appointment of subordinate officers, is under indispensable obligations to select men of the very same character which has been already described.*

‘Moreover, thou shalt provide,’ said Jethro to Moses, ‘out of all the people, able men ; such as fear God ; men of truth, hating covetousness ; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of ten ; and let them judge the people at all seasons.’ ‘Judges and officers,’ said Moses to the Israelites, ‘shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which the Lord thy God giveth thee throughout thy tribes : and they shall judge the people with just judgment. Thou shalt not wrest judgment : thou shalt not respect persons ; neither take a gift ; for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous.’ — ‘Him,’ says David, speaking of this very subject, ‘him that hath a high look, and a proud heart, I will not suffer. Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me ; he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me. He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house, he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight.’ These passages need no comment. The voice of God has here determined this point in a manner which cannot be misunderstood.

With this decision exactly accords that of experience, and that of common sense. Subordinate officers are eyes, and ears, and hands, and feet, to their superiors in office. They are the means of furnishing them with the most necessary information ; that of the wants, circumstances, dangers, and sufferings, of the nation ; that of the real influence of governmental measures, whether beneficial or mischievous ; and, generally, all that on which future regulations ought to be grounded. They are the immediate means of executing every law, and carry-

ing into effect every measure of administration. Their own conduct, example, and influence, reach every neighbourhood, every fire-side. Nations have almost always suffered incomparably more from a multitude of little tyrants, than from a single great one ; and have been immensely more corrupted by a host of evil examples, than by a solitary pattern of wickedness, however great and splendid. In vain will the wisest, most upright, and most benevolent ruler, labour to promote public happiness, if he commits the administration of his measures to profligates and villains. It is, however, to be remembered, that a ruler will, of course, appoint to subordinate offices men whose character corresponds with his own. A wise and good ruler, so far as his information extends, will choose none but wise and good men to aid him in the business of governing. A bad ruler will find none but bad assistants convenient for his purposes.

8. *A ruler is under the highest obligations to be industrious.*

Industry is the duty of all men, and pre-eminently that of a ruler. The various, complicated, and arduous business of governing, demands the full exertion of all the talents, and the full employment of all the time, allotted to man. Persons in high offices, particularly, are bound to improve their talents by every well directed effort. They are under indispensable obligations to gain, so far as is in their power, the most enlarged and exact information of their official duties, and the best modes of discharging them, of the interests of the people and country over which they preside, of the means by which their rights may be most effectually secured, of the dangers, either at home or abroad, to which they are exposed, and of the ways in which those dangers may be averted ; of the best means of private safety and national defence ; and, in a word, of all those measures by which may be ensured the safety, peace, good order, and universal happiness of the nation.

On this information ought to be founded a course of unremitted industry in effectuating, by the most useful measures, all these great and good purposes. A weak and ignorant ruler may deserve pity; a lazy one can only merit abhorrence. Both are, of course, public nuisances. When God was about to punish the Jews in a terrible manner for their sins, he announced the alarming judgment in this remarkable prediction: 'Behold, the Lord, the Lord of hosts, doth take away from Jerusalem, and from Judah, the stay and the staff; the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water; the mighty man, and the man of war; the judge, and the prophet, and the prudent, and the ancient; the captain of fifty, and the honourable man, and the counsellor, and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator. And I will give children to be their princes; and babes shall rule over them. And the people shall be oppressed, every one by another, and every one by his neighbour. The child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient, and the base against the honourable.' In the view of God, therefore, the loss of wise and able rulers, and the government of weak and foolish ones, such as indolent men in office always are, are both terrible judgments upon a nation, and severe inflictions of the divine vengeance upon guilt of no common dye.

SERMON CXIV.

THE LAW OF GOD. THE DECALOGUE.

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT.

DUTY OF SUBJECTS.

Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.—Exod. xx. 12.

In the last Discourse I considered, at some length, the duty of *sons*. I shall now go on to examine

that of *subjects*. As a free government is that with which alone we have any practical concern, my observations will be especially referred to a government of this kind. All subjects have, indeed, many duties in common; but there are some which are peculiar to men living under despotic dominion. These I shall not think it necessary to particularize.

Every free government is more or less elective. The privilege of choosing those who are to govern them, is, to every people possessing it, a blessing of inestimable importance; and, like other blessings, brings with it the corresponding duties. Out of it particularly arises,

1. *The great duty of free citizens, which is to elect always, as far as may be, rulers possessing the several characteristics mentioned in the preceding Discourse.* such as are sincere, just, benevolent, disposed to respect the laws of their country, pious, exemplary, industrious; and thus prepared to select for subordinate offices, whenever vested with the power of selecting, men of the same character.

That such rulers are agreeable to the will of God, and that he has required all rulers to be such, cannot be questioned. No more can it be questioned, that one great reason why he has required them to be of this character, is the establishment, in this way, of the happiness of the people whom they rule. In every ordinance of this nature God has directly consulted the happiness of his creatures, and has undoubtedly chosen the very best means of accomplishing it. The establishment of national happiness then demands, indispensably, that rulers be of this character. But, in the case supposed, the people themselves elect their rulers. They are, therefore, bound indispensably to elect such, and such only, as are agreeable to the will of God, as unfolded in his word; such, and such only, as will contribute directly to the establishment of public happiness.

Every people ought to remember, that in this case *the magistracy is of their own creation*; that just such men are introduced into it, as they please; and that

if they are not men of wisdom and virtue, the electors are the sole and blameworthy cause. In the very act of electing weak and wicked men to places of magistracy, they testify publicly to God and the world, that they choose to have weak and wicked men for their rulers. All the evils of a weak and wicked administration of government are, therefore, chargeable in the first instance, and in the prime degree, to themselves only. By what solemn obligations, then, are they bound to take the most effectual care, that those whom they elect be men of acknowledged wisdom and virtue! To choose men of the contrary character is to rebel against the known will of God, to sport with their own happiness, and to hazard that of their posterity. The only part of this subject about which a question will be raised, and the part about which no question can consistently, be of producing a sudden, general, and important reformation, not only in his court, but throughout his kingdom. Whenever such a prince ascended the throne, piety and morality immediately lifted up their heads, and began to find friends, to exert their influence to abash vice, to silence murmurs, to diminish sufferings, and to create, what they always create, public and individual happiness. Such princes also regularly appointed, so far as it was in their power, men resembling themselves to the subordinate offices of government; and thus stationed public benefactors in every corner of their country. For all these reasons, their names, as a sweet memorial, have been wafted down the stream of time with distinction and honour, and have commanded the esteem of every succeeding generation. Such rulers were Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Deborah, Samuel, David, Solomon, before his declension, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, Josiah, and Nehemiah. Such also were the brave and virtuous Maccabees. I shall only add, that these rulers strenuously defended the country which they governed.

Take now the reverse of this picture. The wicked princes, to whose dominion these nations were at

In the preceding Discourse I have illustrated this subject, in a summary manner, from the political history of Judah and Israel, recorded in the Scriptures. This illustration, corresponding exactly with every other of the same nature, and in the light and conviction which it communicates totally superior to them all, deserves to be resumed in this place, and to be insisted on particularly; much more particularly, indeed, than the present occasion will permit. Every virtuous prince of Judah was regularly a public blessing; beloved of his people; devoted to the advancement, and sedulously engaged in employing the means of accomplishing the actual and extensive advancement of their happiness: the acknowledged object of peculiar Divine favour; the cause, in this manner, for which peculiar blessings descended on his nation; and the honourable instruction either with the Scriptures or common sense, be ever raised, is the declaration, that a ruler ought to be a virtuous man. To the question concerning this subject the scriptural answer is short. 'As a roaring lion, and a raging bear; so is a wicked ruler over the poor people.' This, it is to be remembered, is the decision, not of Solomon only, but of God. Common sense, directed by its own unerring rule of experience, has regularly given the same decision; and mustered before the eyes of mankind a long host of tyrants and public plunderers, of profligate legislators and abandoned magistrates, whose names have been followed by the hisses, and loaded with the execrations of mankind. Virtuous rulers, on the contrary, have always, unless in times of peculiar violence and prejudice, been seen and acknowledged to be public blessings. Indeed, it may be doubted whether the general proposition now under consideration was ever seriously questioned by a sober man. All the doubts concerning it, all the opposition which it has met with, seem to have arisen in seasons of party and dissension; from the wish to carry some favourite point, or the desire of advancing to place and power some favourite person.

times subjected, blasted both their virtue and their happiness. Ahaz, Manasseh, Amon, and the three last kings of Judah, were malignant and affecting examples of this truth. Weak, as well as wicked, these princes ruined their people at home, and provided no means for their defence against enemies abroad. With an unobstructed and terrible rapidity, the nation which they ruled slid down the steep of declension, and plunged into the gulf at the bottom.

Still more instructive is the account given us concerning the kings of Israel. Of Jeroboam, the first of these princes, the most dreadful of all characters is communicated to us in this remarkable declaration ; that ' he sinned, and made Israel to sin.' A polluted and profligate wretch himself, he converted all around him into profligates ; and began a corruption of religion and morals, which, extending its baleful influence through every succeeding age, terminated in the final ruin of his country. The evils introduced by him operated with a commanding and universal efficacy ; and they were cherished and promoted by Nadab his son, Baasha *his* murderer, Elah *his* son, and Zimri *his* murderer ; and by Omri, Ahab, and every one who followed them. By their pestilential example, and under their deadly influence, the nation became abandoned. Truth, justice, and piety sighed their last farewell to the reprobated race, and took their final flight. A nuisance to the world, and an object of the Divine abhorrence, the unhappy nation became lost to every hope of recovery, and was finally given up as a prey to the Assyrian, at that time the general scourge and destroyer of mankind.

It is impossible for any people, with its eyes open, to wish for such rulers as these. When it is remembered, that this testimony concerning evil rulers is the testimony of God himself ; that the same causes will always produce the same effects ; and that the rulers were no more injurious to Israel, than they will be to every other people, governed by them ; it is plain, that no people can elect such rulers, with-

out assuring themselves, that in this very act they are accomplishing their own ruin. A nation which elects wicked rulers, it ought ever to be remembered is chargeable, not only with the guilt of being corrupted, as Israel was, but with the additional and peculiar guilt also of originating the means of its own corruption. It not only *becomes* wicked, but *makes itself* wicked, by giving to evil men the power and influence which enable them to spread the plague of vice through every part of the political body. What man of common sense and sober reflection can consent to make himself chargeable with these evils?

But it may be said, that those who elect will often be unable to distinguish virtuous men from such as are not virtuous. I answer, that churches of Christ are also unable to make this discrimination with certainty; yet, wherever they are faithful and vigilant, they find no serious difficulty in keeping themselves, to a good degree, pure, and safe from gross and unhappy mixtures. I answer, farther, that a steady, regular aim, on the part of a whole nation, or other body politic, to choose virtuous rulers, and none but such as are virtuous, will ordinarily accomplish this invaluable purpose. Should it fail in any instance, the nation will still have done its duty. As to extreme cases, such as those in which no virtuous man can be found to fill the office contemplated, they must occur so rarely as hardly to require rules of direction. It will always be in the power of a people to select from the candidates the best man; and such a selection will undoubtedly answer the demands of duty in a case of this nature. The true difficulty does not lie in our inability to determine who are virtuous men, nor in their want of the proper qualifications for office; but in the want of a fixed and general determination to choose them, in our defective estimate of the importance of virtue to public office, in our preference of *other* qualifications to this, in party attachment, in personal favouritism and in gross and guilty indifference to the public good. All these are deplorable prejudices, and pal-

pable crimes ; miserably weak, as well as dangerously sinful ; fraught with innumerable evils, not always immediate, perhaps, but always near, certain, and dreadful.

2. *Subjects are bound faithfully to obey their rulers.*

Concerning this truth, in the abstract, there will probably be no debate, except what is excited either by passion or by frenzy. The only serious questions which can rationally be made here, are, *How far is his obedience to extend ?* and, *What are the cases in which it may be lawfully refused ?* The importance of these questions must be deeply felt by every man. By St. Paul ‘every soul’ is required to ‘be subject to the higher powers ;’ because, as he informs us, ‘the powers that be are ordained of God.’ By the same apostle we are farther told, that ‘whosoever resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God, and shall receive to himself damnation :’ that is, not damnation in the proper sense, or as the word is now understood ; but the condemnation denounced by the law of God against all sin. By St. Peter we are directed to ‘submit to every ordinance of man, for the Lord’s sake : whether it be to the king, as supreme ; or unto governors ;’ that is, generally, to all persons possessing lawful authority ; ‘for such, he declares, ‘is the will of God.’ With these precepts in his hand, no Christian can fail to believe the questions mentioned above to be of incalculable importance to him, and his fellow-men. It is as really the duty of a minister to explain this part of the gospel to his congregation, and to enforce upon them these precepts, as any other. Nor can he be at all excused in passing them by. I shall therefore exhibit to you, on the present occasion, my own views concerning this long and vehemently disputed topic.

(1.) *Subjects are not bound to obey the commands of magistrates, as such, when they are not warranted by law.*

The law creates magistrates, and defines all their powers and rights. Whenever they require that which is not warranted by law, they cease to act as magistrates, and return to the character of mere

citizens. In this character they have plainly no authority over their fellow-citizens. It is not the *man*, but the *magistrate*, whom God requires us to obey.

(2.) *Subjects are bound to obey magistrates, when acting agreeably to the laws, in all cases not contrary to the will of God, as unfolded in the Scriptures.*

This I take to be the true import of the directions given by St. Peter and St. Paul. These apostles cannot, I think, be rationally supposed to enjoin upon subjects obedience to those commands of ruler, which contravene the laws of the land; or which lie beyond the limits of his lawful authority. They require our obedience to the magistrate, *acting as a magistrate*, or within the limits of his lawful authority; and not to the magistrate, *transgressing the bounds of law*, and acting merely as a private individual, according to the dictates of his own discretion, caprice, or whim. Much less can they be supposed to require our obedience to those commands of a ruler, which are opposed to the law of God. Whether we should ‘obey God rather than men,’ can never be seriously made a question by common sense, any more than by piety.

There may be, there often are, cases in which, from motives of prudence and expediency, we may feel ourselves bound to obey magistrates, for the time at least, when acting beyond their authority, and aside from law. This subject is too extensive to be particularly considered on the present occasion. I shall only observe, therefore, that we are bound to fix in our minds a high sense of the duty and importance of obeying rulers; and of the danger always threatening the public peace and prosperity from unnecessary disobedience. Such a sense will, it is believed, prevent most of the real difficulties to be apprehended in cases of this nature.

The observations already made concerning this general subject, will prepare the way for settling our opinions concerning a particular question involved in it, which is of high importance to mankind. I

is this; *Whether a nation is warranted to resist rule when seriously encroaching on its liberties?* It is my intention to confine the answer which will now be given to this question, to the *lawfulness* of such resistance. The *expediency* of it I shall suppose to be granted, so far as the safety and success of the resistance is concerned. In other words, I shall suppose the people immediately interested in the question, to have as fair an opportunity as can be reasonably expected, of preserving or acquiring political liberty; and of establishing, after the contest is ended, a free and happy government. In this case, the resistance in question is, in my own view, warranted by the law of God. It is well known, that this opinion has been adopted by some wise and good men, and denied by others. But the reasons alleged by both classes for their respective doctrines, have, so far as they have fallen under my observation, been less satisfactory than I wished.

A nation, already free, ought, whenever encroachments upon its freedom are begun, to reason in some such manner as the following:—

‘Despotism, according to the universal and uniform experience of man, has regularly been fatal to every human interest. It has attacked private happiness, and invaded public prosperity. It has multiplied sufferings without number, and beyond degree. It has visited regularly the nation, the neighbourhood, and the fire-side; and carried with it public sorrow, and private anguish. Personal liberty has withered at its touch; and national safety, peace, and prosperity, have faded at its approach. Enjoyment has fled before it; life expired, and hope vanished. Evils of this magnitude have all been suffered, also, merely to gratify the caprice, the pride, the ambition, the avarice, the resentment, or the voluptuousness of one, or a few individuals; each of whose interests is of the same value in the sight of God, and no more, than those of every other individual belonging to the nation. Can there be a reason, do the Scriptures furnish one, why the millions of the pre-

sent generation, and the more numerous millions of succeeding generations, should suffer these evils, merely to gratify the lusts of ten, twenty, or one hundred of their fellow-men ?'

' If an affirmative answer should be given to this question, let it be remembered, that *the same despotic power has, with equal regularity, cut off from subjects the means of usefulness and duty.* Mankind are sent into the world to serve God, and do good to each other. If these things are not done, we live in vain, and worse than in vain. If the means of doing them are taken away, we are prevented, just so far, from answering the end of our creation. In vain is mental and bodily energy, in vain are talents, opportunities, and privileges, bestowed by our Creator, if they are to be wrested from us by our fellow-men, or the means of exerting them taken away. In vain are we constituted parents, if we are precluded from procuring the comfortable sustenance, providing for the education, and promoting the piety and salvation of our offspring. In vain are we made children, if we are forbidden to perform the filial duties. In vain are we placed in the other relations of life, if we are prohibited from performing the duties to which they give birth. Take away usefulness from man, and there is nothing left which is good, but every thing which is bad. This usefulness, however, despots have in a dreadful manner either prevented, or destroyed. They have shrunk the talents, and palsied the energy of the mind ; have shut the door of knowledge, and blocked up the path of virtue ; have wilted the human race into sloth and imbecility, and lowered the powers of man almost to the level of brutism. The little spot of Greece exhibited more energy, and more specimens of mental greatness, in one hundred and fifty years, than the Chinesian world has exhibited in two thousand.'

' But this is not all. *Despotic rulers have exercised a most malignant influence upon the virtue of mankind.* They have assumed the prerogatives of heaven ; and prescribed, as the will of God, a system of religious

doctrines and duties to their subjects. This system has invariably been absurd, gross, and monstrous. The morality which it has enjoined has been chiefly a code of crimes fitter for the regulation of banditti, than of sober men. The religion which it has taught, has been a scheme of impiety. Yet this system they have enforced by the most terrible penalties ; by the loss of property, liberty, and life ; by the jail and the gibbet, the wheel and the rack, the faggot and the cross. Blood has stained the sceptre—martyrs have surrounded the throne.’

‘ Even this is not all. *Despots, bad men themselves, must be served by bad men.* The baleful and deleterious influence of the head and the members united, has extended every where, even to the corner and the cottage ; and, like the deadly damp of the cavern, has imperceptibly and silently extinguished light and life, wherever it has spread. Virtue has fallen amid the exhalation, unobserved and unknown. In its place has arisen and flourished a train of monstrous corruptions, which, with continually increasing strength, have finally gained an entire possession of the land. Degenerated beyond recall, and polluted beyond hope, a people under this influence has sunk into remediless ruin ; and only continued to exist, until mercy was wearied out by their profligacy, and reluctantly gave the sign for vengeance to sweep them away. One regular and complete example of all these evils is given us by the voice of God himself in the kingdom of Israel. Profane history records a multitude. Is there any principle, either scriptural or rational, which demands of any nation such a sacrifice ?’

‘ But were we to admit, that such a sacrifice might lawfully be made by us, so far as ourselves only are concerned, it is farther to be remembered, that we are intrusted with all the possessions, privileges, blessings, and hopes of our offspring, through every succeeding generation. Guardians appointed by God himself, how can we fail of discharging punctiliously this sacred trust ? The deposit is of value literally

immense. It involves the education, the comfort, the safety, the usefulness, the religious system, the morals, the piety, and the eternal life of millions, which can neither be known nor calculated. This is a trust which cannot lawfully be given up, unless in obedience to a known and unquestionable command of God; and no such command can be pleaded. Equally important is it, that we prevent (for, under God, none but we can prevent) the contrary innumerable and immeasurable evils.'

'At the same time, it is ever to be remembered, that under a free government, all the blessings which I have mentioned, so far as they are found in the present world, live and prosper. Such a government is the soil and the climate, the rain and the sunshine, of human good. Despotism, on the contrary, is the combined drought and sterility of Nubia, the frost and darkness of Zembla; amid which, virtue, comfort, and safety can never spring.'

With these considerations in view, it is unquestionably evident to me, that nations are bound, so far as it is possible, to maintain their freedom, and to resist every serious encroachment upon it, with such efforts as are necessary for its preservation.

(3.) *Subjects are bound to obey every magistrate, acting lawfully, in the same manner.*

The constable and tithing-man are, in their own sphere, as truly armed with the authority of the state, as the governor and the prince: and the divine command is, 'Submit to every ordinance of man,' that is, to governmental authority in every department, 'for the Lord's sake.' To resist rulers in high stations may be productive of more mischief, than to resist those in low ones. In other respects the guilt of the resistance is the same.

3. *Subjects are bound to honour their rulers.*

They are bound to treat them with all the becoming marks of respect and reverence. Rulers, when treated with little external respect, will soon cease to be respected.

They are bound to support them honourably. This is

one of the few doctrines in which all ages and nations have united. Avarice alone has, in any case, prompted men to believe the contrary doctrine, or hindered them from carrying *this* into proper execution. An honourable support to rulers is that which the general sense of propriety pronounces to be of this nature.

Subjects are bound also to speak respectfully of their rulers. On this subject it will be necessary to be somewhat more particular.

'Thou shalt not *speak evil* of the ruler of thy people,' is certainly a precept dictated by reason, as well as revelation. Still it cannot, I think, be denied, that the faults of rulers are, on certain occasions, to be exposed, as well as those of private individuals. The prophets frequently exposed the faults of their rulers; and Christ and his apostles those of the magistrates of their day. The question, When, and in what manner, this may be done by us? becomes, therefore, a serious topic of investigation.

Concerning this subject, the following thoughts have occurred to me:

(1.) *Censures of rulers, in order to be lawful, must be true.*

(2.) *There must be a real and solid reason for uttering them.* It is not enough, that a ruler has done evil. In order to be justified in publishing it, we must be assured that some important good will, with high probability, spring from the publication. The evil arising from this source is, in the abstract, always real and important. Where there is no good sufficiently probable and sufficiently important to balance this evil, we cannot be vindicated in bringing it into existence.

(3.) *We must sincerely aim at doing this good.*

A watchful and faithful determination of this kind, accompanied by a scrupulous and conscientious sense of its high importance, as a part of our duty, will ordinarily preserve us from the danger of transgression. He who in a proper and evangelical manner determined such a determination, and made it an

habitual part of his character, will almost always perform his duty with respect to this subject ; and rarely, or never, censure a ruler, unless on solid grounds.

(4.) *Such censures should in all ordinary cases be uttered in the language of moderation, and not of invective, or ridicule.*

A great part of the evils done in this way flow from *the manner* in which the censure is conducted. Where this is sober and temperate, there is usually little room to fear. Where it is not, the censurer is always exposed to the danger of criminality.

4. *Subjects are bound to defend their rulers.*

This duty equally includes opposition to private and civil violence, and resistance to open hostility ; and is so obvious and acknowledged, as to need no illustration. In defending their rulers, subjects are only employed in ultimately defending themselves.

5. *Subjects are bound to furnish all necessary supplies for the exigencies of government.*

‘ For this cause,’ says St. Paul (that is, ‘ for conscience’ sake’), ‘ pay ye tribute also. For they’ (that is, rulers), ‘ are God’s ministers ; attending continually upon this very thing. Render, therefore, to all their dues ; tribute to whom tribute is due, and custom to whom custom.’ Taxes are, ordinarily the only national supplies. Every public object almost demands some expense ; in peace not a little in war much more. If the necessary supplies be not furnished, these objects must either languish, or fail. God has, therefore, wisely and benevolently required mankind to render tribute and custom, when lawfully demanded. It is to be remembered, that this requisition is made by infinite authority and can no more be dispensed with, than any other command of God.

6. *Subjects are bound to pray for their rulers.*

To the performance of this duty no virtuous subject can ever want motives. The arduous nature of those duties to which rulers are called, the responsibility of their stations, the difficulties which they

have to encounter, and the discouragements under which they labour, teach us in the strongest manner, that they daily and eminently need the divine blessing. This blessing, like all others, will be given only in answer to prayer; to the prayers, indeed, of the rulers themselves; and still more to the united prayers of both rulers and people. Mere benevolence then, mere compassion for men struggling with peculiar difficulties in their behalf, demands this duty from subjects.

At the same time, it is loudly called for by the regard which we owe to the public welfare. National blessings are given in answer to national prayers. Of these blessings rulers are the chief instruments. But they cannot be the means of good to a nation, unless their efforts are crowned with the divine blessing. If nations then would receive public blessings, they are bound, indispensably, to supplicate for their rulers the favour of God.

Finally, God has required such prayers at our hands. 'I exhort, therefore,' says St. Paul, 'that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men: for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty; for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour.'

The only remark which I shall annex to this Discourse, is, that, connected with the preceding one, it shews, unanswerably, the groundlessness and folly of an observation, repeated proverbially by multitudes of men in this and other countries; viz. that *religion has nothing to do with politics*, or, in other words, with *government*.

These Discourses, summarily as the subjects of them have been considered, prove beyond all reasonable debate, that the whole vindicable conduct of rulers towards their subjects, and of subjects towards their rulers, is nothing but a mere collection of duties, objects of moral obligation, required by God, and indispensably owed to him by men. The

Christian religion, therefore, the rule of duty, and involving all moral obligation, is so far from having nothing to do with this subject, that it is inseparably interwoven with every part of it. Accordingly, the Bible regulates, and, were it not sinfully prevented from its proper influence, would exactly and entirely control, all the political doctrines and actions of men. It is, indeed, as easy and as common to deny truth, and refuse to perform our duty, to disobey God, and injure men, in political concerns, as in any other. In truth, there has been no field of iniquity more extensive than this; none in which more enormous crimes or more terrible sufferings have existed. All these crimes and sufferings have sprung from the ignorance of or disobedience to the Scriptures. Were *they* allowed to govern the political conduct of mankind, both the crimes and the sufferings would vanish; every duty, both of rulers and subjects, would be performed, and every interest would be completely secured. In what manner the doctrine against which I am contending ever came to be received by any man, who was not peculiarly weak or wicked, I am at a loss to determine. It would seem, that even the careless and gross examination of the most heedless reflector must have evinced both its folly and falsehood. A dream is not more unfounded; the decisions of frenzy are not more wild. To villains in power, or in pursuit of power, office, and public plunder, it is undoubtedly a most convenient doctrine; as it will quiet the reproaches of conscience, where conscience has not ceased to reproach; and throw the gate which opens to every crime and selfish gratification from its hinges. To subjects, to a state, to a nation, it is literally fatal. The people which have adopted it, may be certainly pronounced to have bidden a final adieu to its peace and its happiness, its virtue and its safety.

END OF VOL. IV.

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